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NEWS OF THE CAPITAL.

CONGRESS BEGINS TO BE BUSY.

A BATCH OF MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED NEW BILLS PRESENTED IN THE HOUSE—A FIRST DEBATE IN THE SENATE—FINANCE—AN EXPECTED VACANCY ON THE BENCH.

New bills were introduced to the House of Representatives at Washington yesterday to the number of two hundred and over. In the Senate occurred the first debate of the session, the incident which provoked it being a resolution offered by Senator Davis, of West Virginia, calling upon the Treasury Department for information about the payment of private claims. A large number of committees met yesterday for the first time. It is reported in Washington that Justice Hunt is about to retire from the bench, and that Senator Edmunds will be appointed to the place, if he will accept it. Indian affairs are expected to occupy a large part of the attention of Congress this Winter.

TWO HUNDRED BILLS IN TWO HOURS.

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES LAYING OUT A GREAT DEAL OF WORK FOR ITS COMMITTEES—NEW BILLS YESTERDAY.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9.—It would not be fair to say that the members of the House of Representatives are idle. No longer ago than last Wednesday a long list of bills was brought in, and it was supposed that the members had pretty generally unloaded. This was a mistake. To-day the House spent more than two hours in the same manner as on Wednesday, and about 200 more bills were introduced.

Few of these were of public interest. Among them was the usual assortment of financial bills, but none of them presented any novel features except that of Mr. Newberry, of Michigan, who desires the Government to provide a redemption fund of $40,000,000, one-half in gold and one-half in silver coin, and on this fund to issue gold and silver certificates.

After the flood of bills had subsided, Mr. Fernando Wood reported from the Committee on Ways and Means a concurrent resolution providing for an adjournment from the 23d inst. to January 6. On motion of Mr. Blount, of Georgia, the resolution was amended by making the first date December 19. This was brought about by an explanation from Mr. Blount, who is a member of the Appropriations Committee, to the effect that the committee hopes to report the Pensions, Fortification and Military Academy appropriation bills, and have them passed before the 19th inst.

The House then spent two hours in debating a bill to define the duties and fix the compensation of the reporter of the Supreme Court. The object of the bill is to enable the public to obtain the published decisions of the Court at a lower cost than at present. The cost now is $5 a volume; and this, it is said, may be reduced to $1 50 a volume. The bill was not disposed of when the House adjournad.

The next bill on the calendar referred to the Committee of the Whole is Mr. Townsend's to prevent the transfer of causes from State to Federal Courts.

MR. DAVIS A LITTLE MYSTERIOUS.

A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR INFORMATION FROM THE TREASURY WHICH HE FAILS TO EXPLAIN THE OBJECT OF—MR. EDMUNDS QUESTIONS HIM HARD.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9.—The first brief approach to anything like a debate in the Senate took place during the morning hour to-day. It was as calm and placid as a Summer shower, and was in entire accord with the amicable sentiments professedly entertained by the members of either party toward those of the other. At the same time, it developed the fact that the Republicans at least are on vigilant guard against the passage of any political measure unless its character is first fully exposed.

Senator Davis, of West Virginia, whose hobby it is to investigate for political purposes the transactions of the Treasury Department, brought forward a brand-new project in the shape of a resolution calling upon the Secretary of the Treasury for a statement showing "by States" the amounts paid out since 1866 for claims growing out of the war.

It was impossible without explanation to understand what the resolution meant. In answer to questions by Senator Edmunds and Senator Dawes, Mr. Davis explained that the writer of the resolution wished to know what amounts had been paid out to residents of each State for private claims since the end of the war.

Senator Edmunds said that there was not the least objection that he could see to making public any information attainable from the Treasury records; but it would cost a great sum to prepare such a statement, and he could see no possible advantage to the Senate in having it in the shape called for by the resolution. If the work was to be done at all it should cover all the period of the war from its beginning until the present time, showing the aggregate amounts paid out by the Secretary for each State in consequence of the war. He questioned the propriety of furnishing by a formal act of the Senate material which would only be serviceable for stump speeches; yet if the whole story could be told at once, and all the expenditures resulting from the war could be placed before the Senate, he thought it would be a very useful reminder of a most disagreeable episode in our National history. He proposed an amendment carrying the date from which the statement should begin back to 1861.

The Senator also questioned Mr. Davis at some length as to his object in this matter, but the expiration of the morning hour put an end to the discussion for to-day.

The general impression is that Senator Davis has run against something in the Treasury Department in regard to the payment of private claims of which he hopes to make political capital if he can bring it out in just the form his experts have planned it and disconnected with other facts and figures of an opposite political character. Senator Davis is a guileless man, but he failed to explain the point in his resolution, although repeatedly asked to do so, to-day.

NEW FINANCIAL MEASURES.

MR. BUCKNER'S PLAN FOR REDEEMING LEGAL-TENDERS AND SIX PER CENT BONDS—A BILL FOR RETIRING NATIONAL BANK NOTES OFFERED BY MR. MYERS.

[GENERAL PRESS DISPATCH.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9.—Mr. Buckner, of Missouri, introduced a joint resolution in the House to-day, directing the Secretary of the Treasury to set aside $100,000,000 in coin for the redemption of legal-tenders, and that any surplus over and above that sum remaining in the Treasury be used in the purchase and redemption—on account of the Sinking Fund—of any bonds of the United States bearing 6 per cent interest, now outstanding, on such terms as he may deem most advantageous to the Government.

Mr. Muller's bill to establish a mint at New-York contemplates an appropriation of $1,000,000 for the purchase of a site and the erection of a suitable building, and $200,000 for the purchase of the requisite machinery.

Representative Myers's bill to replace National bank notes with Treasury notes provides that from and after its passage all National bank notes which may be received by the Treasury Department, or any officer thereof, shall not be paid out. It provides further, that when the notes of any one bank so held shall reach $1,000 steps shall be taken to redeem and cancel them. Treasury notes exactly equal to the amount of National bank notes so cancelled are to be issued and paid out by the Government as fast as may be by law authorized and permitted. These Treasury notes, when issued, shall be considered legal-tenders for all purposes not otherwise provided for by law. The bill also provides that when these Treasury notes, so accumulating, amount to $100,000, the Treasury Department shall expend the same in the purchase of any of the interest-bearing bonds of the United States. The Secretary of the Treasury is prohibited, after the passage of this Act, from receiving on deposit any bonds of the United States as a pledge or security for any further issue of National bank notes.

FINANCIAL LEGISLATION DISCOURAGED.

THE SENATE CAUCUS COMMITTEE TO RECOMMEND THAT NO LEGISLATION BE HAD—GENERAL FORT HAS ANOTHER TALK WITH THE PRESIDENT.

[GENERAL PRESS DISPATCH.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9.—The Advisory Committee of the caucus of Republican Senators, consisting of Messrs. Morrill, Conkling, Hamlin, McMillan, Booth, Kirkwood, Logan and Carpenter, has decided to recommend that the party in the Senate should commit itself to the policy of non-action in regard to any and all legislation affecting the currency, whether gold, greenbacks or silver, during the present session of Congress. Senator Morrill will recommend, as a minority of one, that the greenbacks be divested of their legal-tender power, and that some provision be made for their retirement.

Representative Fort, of Illinois, has had another interview with the President in relation to the latter's recommendations concerning greenbacks, and General Fort's adverse resolution now pending before the House Committee on Banking and Currency. The President said to General Fort that though he adhered to the financial recommendations of his Message, and is responsible for them and still believes in them, he would, nevertheless, not feel in the least aggrieved should General Fort continue to press the resolution in question, nor should the Republicans adopt it, if the party disagrees with him.

COMMITTEES FALLING TO WORK.

A NUMBER OF THEM MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS SESSION—INCIDENTS OF INTEREST.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9.—A number of committees met to-day, and several of them made progress with business on hand.

The House Committee on Appropriations passed a resolution to report the Military Academy, the Fortifications, and the Pensions Appropriation bills, and urge their passage before the holiday recess. It is not expected that either of these bills will evoke much discussion. At the request of Chairman Atkins, who is ill, the deficiency appropriation for the pay of United States Marshals will not be considered at present.

The Committee on Contested Elections postponed the contested case of McCabe against Orth until next week, but there is little doubt that it will be dismissed.

The Committee on Commerce considered the Steamboat bill, in which Western people are so interested. This measure has passed the House twice, but has been defeated in the Senate. It is now understood that Senator Conkling and others who have hitherto opposed the bill will withdraw their opposition. The friends of the measure are now hopeful of success.

Mr. Reagan's bill will be taken up on Friday next, when a hearing will be given to members of the Board of Trade of New-York and to gentlemen representing the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. At the meeting to-day, Mr. Totten, representing the Pennsylvania Railroad, was the only transportation man present.

The Senate Committee on Finance held its first regular meeting for the present session this morning and proceeded as usual at the beginning of a session to arrange the docket, which now comprises sixty-six bills and resolutions, mostly of a private character. No important public matters were reached. Nothing was done except to refer a number of bills to sub-committees, and to pass upon several private claims. A special meeting is called for next Friday, when an effort will be made to proceed to more important business.

The sub-committee of the House Committee on Manufactures had under consideration this morning Representative McCoid's joint resolution to amend the Constitution, "giving to Congress the power to grant, protect and regulate trade marks." It was agreed to report favorably, and urge that the resolution be passed speedily, in order that it may be ratified by the Legislatures sitting this Winter. The same action will probably be taken by the full committee at the meeting to-morrow.

The House Judiciary Committee held its first meeting during the present session to-day. The only business transacted was to appoint a sub-committee on District Courts, to whom will be referred all bills relating to the formation of new districts and new courts.

The House Committee on Foreign Affairs agreed on a report this morning, "that there is urgent need for legislation for the protection of immigrants arriving at the Port of New-York." Chairman Cox was instructed to report favorably upon the bill introduced by him last week upon this subject. Tuesdays were assigned for the regular meetings of the committee. The House Committee on Military Affairs held its first meeting to-day, and appointed a sub-committee, consisting of Messrs. Sparks, Lefevre and McCook, to consider and report upon the appeal of General Fitz John Porter to be restored to his former rank in the army. A sub-committee was also appointed on the reorganization of the army, and General Joseph E. Johnston was made chairman.

THE RED MAN AND HIS RIGHTS.

THESE TOPICS LIKELY TO BE DEBATED AT MUCH LENGTH THIS WINTER—LAND TITLES, TRANSFER OF THE INDIAN BUREAU, THE LANDS OF THE UTES—MR. BELFORD'S ARGUMENT.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9.—It is probable that Indian affairs will absorb a large share of the attention of Congress during the present session.

Chairman Scales, of the House Committee on Indian Affairs, informed a TRIBUNE correspondent today that he has strong hopes of the passage of the bill to give Indians land titles severally, and to reduce the number and area of the Indian reservations. This bill has the approval of the Interior Department, and in most of its features of the Board of Indian Commissioners. It has been agreed upon by the House Committee, and probably will be reported at an early day.

The transfer of the Indian Bureau to the War Department will also be agitated. Appearances indicate that the measure has gained strength in both branches of Congress within the last year.

Another subject which will cause debate is the fact that the people of Colorado demand the removal of the Ute Indians beyond the borders of that State. This morning Representative Belford, of Colorado, appeared before the House Committee on Indian Affairs and advocated the passage of a joint resolution providing for immediate negotiations with the Utes, looking to the extinction of the title to their reservation and their removal from the State. The resolution Mr. Belford presented was drafted in the Interior Department and contained a proposition for the removal of the Utes to the Indian Territory.

The Southwestern Representatives on the committee objected to the latter proposition.

It was then suggested that the Indians be removed to the Northern part of New-Mexico, which Mr. Belford described as possessing the same climate and advantages as that part of Colorado where the Utes now live. Another suggestion was that the Utes be given 160 acres of land apiece on the present White River Reservation. This suggestion did not appear to be very favorably received; but Mr. Belfore said it would be acceptable to the people of Colorado if nothing better could be done.

Mr. Belford explained to the committee that the Ute Reservation, which contains 12,000,000 acres, comprises about 2,000,000 acres of arable land. The remainder consists of mountains which, being believed to be very rich in mineral deposits, will swarm next Spring with miners and prospectors. The eastern border of the reservation is only thirty-five miles west of Leadville, which city, Mr. Belford thinks, will number 75,000 inhabitants within twelve months. He says that the mountains must be open to the miners next Spring or there will be trouble. Mr. Belford gave the Utes a pretty bad name, and called them an organized band of assassins and marauders. He says that they have destroyed 500 miles of forest in the State within a year, that they are killing and driving out all the game, and that they never will become farmers. It appears also, according to Mr. Belford's statement, that the Utes are carpet-baggers, if that name can be applied to blanket Indians, for they formerly inhabited New-Mexico, and that they first made their homes in Colorado about fifteen years ago.

One member of the committee raised the question whether it would be right for the Government to deprive the Utes of their lands if they did not desire to leave them.

Mr. Belford remarked that when he came to Washington he had to cross five or six great States of which the Indians had been "deprived." It appeared to him rather too late in the day to discuss the moral phases of this subject. He also intimated that it is rather impudent for the people of those States to accuse the people of Colorado of a desire to rob the Indian of his lands.

It is quite probable that Congress will take measures to extinguish the Indian title to the Ute reservation. If it does not it is quite probable that the mining population of Colorado will take the matter into their own hands next Spring. In either case the Utes, like "Poor Joe," will be compelled to "move on."

JUSTICE HUNT TO RESIGN.

A RUMOR TO THIS EFFECT OBTAINING CREDENCE—SENATOR EDMUNDS MENTIONED AS LIKELY TO SUCCEED HIM.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9.—There is excellent reason to believe that Associate Justice Hunt, of the United States Supreme Court, has either placed his resignation in the hands of the President or announced his intention to do so very soon, and that the position has been offered to Senator Edmunds, who holds it under advisement. It has long been known that Judge Hunt has contemplated resignation in consequence of ill health. The President's intention to offer the position to Senator Edmunds has also been known.

All those who can speak with authority upon the subject decline either to affirm or deny the truth of the report. They say that it would be improper to speak at this time.

There is probably not a Republican in the land, or for that matter a Democrat either, who would be more certain of confirmation at the hands of a Democratic Senate for any position to which he might be named, than Senator Edmunds. Although beyond all comparison the most awkward man in that body to encounter in debate, the readiest at parliamentary repartee, and the most obstinate with his objections to everything which is questionable, he is nevertheless believed to have the friendship, and most certainly has the respect, of every Senator. Even were it not for this, they would doubtless be glad to confirm him, if for nothing more than to get rid of one of their ablest antagonists, and one who is never caught sleeping.

THE PARLEY WITH THE UTES.

THE UTES PROMISED A MILITARY TRIAL—THE PRISONERS TO BE SENT TO FORT LEAVENWORTH.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9.—Chief Ouray's proposal for the surrender of the Utes implicated in the massacre, provided that they were to be tried at Washington, was considered at the Cabinet meeting to-day. It was agreed to send the following telegram, signed by Secretary Schurz, to Commissioner Hatch:

Receive the surrender of the Indians designated by your commission, with the understanding that they will be guaranteed a fair trial by a military commission outside of Colorado and New-Mexico. Inform Ouray that he will be received here with four or five Uncompaghres and three Southern Utes and three White River Utes. Take care that good and influential men be selected, especially from the White River Utes. It will probably be desirable to have Jack here. Take possession of the prisoners with a military guard, and convey them in the first place to Fort Leavenworth.

WASHINGTON NOTES.

WASHINGTON, Tuesday, Dec. 9, 1879.

Representative Buckner introduced a bill relating to the purchase and registration of foreign-built ships. It authorizes the purchase by citizens of the United States of foreign-built ships for the use in the foreign trade.

Albert K. Smiley, and not Wilbur R. Smiley, was appointed by the President to the vacancy in the Board of Indian Commissioners. Mr. Smiley was formerly a resident of Providence, but now lives at New-Paltz, Ulster County, N. Y.

Representative Warner's joint resolution introduced in the House to-day, and referred to the Committee on Commerce, provides for the appointment of a committee consisting of three Senators and five Representatives, who are to take into consideration that part of the report of the Secretary of the Treasury relating to inter-state commerce and to inquire into the existence of railway and other combinations and discriminations affecting inter-State commerce. The committee is to be authorized to sit during the vacation, to have power to send for persons and papers, and to report by bill or otherwise, such legislation as they may deem necessary to remedy the evils which may be found to exist.

[For Regular Report of Congressional Proceedings, See Second Page.]

AFGHANS STILL HOSTILE.

CABUL, Monday, Dec. 8, 1879.

Some Kohistanis have come in and surrendered. An influential native agent, who was collecting supplies at Maidan, has been murdered. That part of the country is much disturbed, and it is reported that rebels are collecting in force there. Two brigades will march upon Maidan immediately, under the command of Generals Baker and MacPherson. An imposing parade of all the troops here, numbering 5,000, was held to-day on the plain near their cantonment.

BELGIUM AND THE POPE.

LONDON, Tuesday, Dec. 9, 1879.

A dispatch from Rome to *The Pall Mall Gazette* says: Cardinal Nina, the Papal Secretary of State, writes to the Papal Nuncio at Brussels that the Holy See has used all efforts in the past to avoid a conflict, and that further overtures are inconsistent with the dignity of the Holy See. Cardinal Nina instructed the Papal Nuncio to return to Rome at once if the Belgian Government recalls its ambassador to the Vatican.

BISMARCK'S RAILWAY SCHEME.

LONDON, Tuesday, Dec. 9, 1879.

Several special dispatches from Berlin predict that the clerical members of the Prussian Landtag will vote against the Government's railway purchase scheme, but it is not anticipated that the measure will be defeated be their opposition.

SNOW IN EUROPE.

LONDON, Tuesday, Dec. 9, 1879.

Heavy snow-falls are reported throughout Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and from Paris, Madrid, Brussels, Florence, Bologna, Milan, Genoa, Venice, Verona and Rome. At Nantes the river Loire is frozen.

THE ROSCOMMON SUNK.

LONDON, Tuesday, Dec. 9, 1879.

The British steamer Roscommon, Captain Steele, from Liverpool, November 13, for Havana, has been capsized and sunk. Six of her crew were drowned.

HALIFAX AS A RIVAL GRAIN PORT.

HALIFAX, N. S., Dec. 9.—In an interview with a reporter concerning the business of the Allan Steamship Line, Sir Hugh Allan, in answer to a question as to when he thought Halifax would become a Winter grain shipping port, said: "Not until Halifax people build elevators and make an effort to make it a grain shipping port. I may say that Halifax is not naturally a suitable port for shipping grain, but can be made so by artificial means. We do not want to go to Boston or Baltimore, and will be only too glad to make this our Winter port of destination, when we can secure return cargoes. Until then we will have to continue our trips to American ports."

KILLED BY A SPECIAL TRAIN.

UTICA, N. Y., Dec. 9.—A special train, carrying President Samuel Sloan and the directors of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad, ran over and killed John Thomas, a farm hand, at Clayville, today. No blame seems to attach to any one.

CRIMES AND CASUALTIES—BY TELEGRAPH.

NEARLY VALUELESS DEBTS.

HALIFAX, N. S., Dec. 9.—Book debts of the insolvent estate of P. Grant & Co., dry goods, amounting to $25,000, were sold at auction to-day for $725.

BURNED IN A COAL MINE.

PITTSTON, Penn., Dec. 9.—John Hindle was burned, probably fatally, by an explosion of fire-damp in the Pittston Coal Company's Twin Shaft, this morning.

A NOTORIOUS THIEF SENTENCED.

HERKIMER, N. Y., Dec. 9.—Charles Regan, the leader of a notorious gang of thieves at Little Falls, was today sentenced to five years at Auburn for burglary.

MASKED BURGLARS AT WORK.

LONDON, Ont., Dec. 9.—On Sunday morning the farmhouse of two brothers, Richard and William Needham, in London township, was entered by masked burglars, who stole $500 and clubbed the two Needhams so terribly that it is feared both will die.

FOUND DEAD IN THE WOODS.

ELKHART, Ind., Dec. 9.—A human body has been found in the woods near North Manchester. It is supposed to be that of David Kerns, a farmer of the neighborhood who had trouble with his wife, which, it was thought, caused him to set out for Kansas. It is supposed that he was murdered.

WRECKED ON TURK'S ISLAND.

VINEYARD HAVEN, Dec. 9.—The brig Lizzie J. Bigelow, Captain Hardenbrook, which arrived here to-day from Turk's Island, brought the crew of the schooner Miriam, Captain Whaley, of Lunenburg, from New-York with a general cargo, bound for Cuba, which was wrecked at Turk's Island on November 11.

THE CANAL TO THE PACIFIC.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE PARIS CONGRESS.

PAPER BY ADMIRAL AMMEN READ BEFORE THE AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY—REASONS FOR FAVORING THE NICARAGUA ROUTE—OBJECTIONS TO THE PROPOSED PANAMA CANAL.

An interesting meeting of the American Geographical Society was held last evening at Chickering Hall. The subject of discussion was the interoceanic ship canal. A paper by Admiral Ammen was read, reviewing the proceedings of the Paris Congress, showing the objections to the Panama route and glancing at the advantages of the Nicaragua plan. Arguments for the San Blas route were presented in a letter from Frederick Kelley.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE VARIOUS ROUTES.

Chief Justice Charles P. Daly, President of the American Geographical Society, presided at the meeting last evening. Among those occupying seats on the platform were Signor de Franco; Civil Engineer Menocal, of Washington; General George W. Cullum, U. S. A.; H. M. Hoyt, E. F. Hall, General Egbert L. Viele, Mr. Bogart and Mr. Finck, of the Society of Civil Engineers; William Remsen, Francis A. Stout, W. H. Moore, A. S. Sullivan, General W. Crawford, United States Army, Francis Baker, John E. Body, N. P. Body, Samuel B. Ruggles, the Rev. Dr. Foster, and Clinton Roosevelt. At the back of the platform there was a large map of Central America, upon which the Nicaraguan route was traced, and also a profile diagram of the proposed Nicaraguan Canal. Admiral Ammen's paper was read by Colonel T. Bailey Myers.

In the opening sentences of the paper reference is made to the report submitted to Congress by Rear Admiral Davis, and published in 1866, and also to two former papers of Admiral Ammen read before the Geographical Society. Admiral Ammen next recites the circumstances connected with his appointment as the representative of this Government at the recent Paris conference. He suggested that as he had been one of a commission appointed by the President in 1872, for the purpose of examining into and reporting upon the question of a ship canal across the Continent, and as this Commission had made its report as to locality, etc., which had been acceptable to the Government, it seemed to him that some other person should be selected to attend the Congress. A second objection was that the selection of the canal route was eminently a question capable of settlement only by the ablest engineers, and those of the highest character.

Notwithstanding these representations, Admiral Ammen continues, the Government preferred to have him go as a delegate, and he therefore undertook the mission. The paper speaks in the highest terms of Mr. Menocal, who was selected at the request of Admiral Ammen to accompany him; and also of Ferdinand de Lesseps, the champion of the Panama route. The paper proceeds as follows:

On the meeting of the Paris Congress, on May 15, an immediate organization was effected, with M. De Lesseps president, and five vice-presidents. The names of the members of the different commissions were called, numbered as follows: 1st, Statistics; 2d, Economic and Commercial; 3d, Navigation; 4th, Technical; 5th, Ways and Means. After naming the members of the commissions, M. De Lesseps remarked in a jocular manner that our work was all cut out, that many of the delegates were anxious to get home, and that we could carry the work through *à l'Américaine*, which may be translated "with a rush." The full meeting of the Congress was then adjourned until the 19th; the commissions met at 9 o'clock the following morning.

Owing to the non-arrival of our heavy package of books, maps, etc., I was not able to present them the next day, as desired, but did so on the morning of the 17th, to the Technical Commission. On their presentation I stated that I would have my remarks printed in French and English. The following day copies were in the hands of the secretary for distribution to such persons as wished them.

This address, which is given in full in Admiral Ammen's paper, presented to the Congress at Paris the different surveys recently executed under the supervision of the United States, and a brief account of the commission which was appointed by the President to examine and consider surveys, etc., for an interoceanic canal. It then discussed the advantages of the three principal routes—the Nicaragua, Panama and Atrato-Napipi—and argued that the considerations advanced would seem to warrant the belief that the cost of construction, including material, would be far less upon the Nicaragua than upon either of the other routes named.

Admiral Ammen then gives at length the proceedings of the Congress. The most important parts of his account are as follows:

The presentation of maps, plans, etc., was followed by a technical presentation of the Nicaragua route by Civil Engineer Menocal. Afterward, in answer to inquiries, he gave the methods of proposed improvement of the harbor of Greytown and the regimen of the bar, as observed by him during several recent visits to that locality. I may add here properly, that the able sub-commission subscribed to the efficiency of the proposed method, and as well to the method proposed for constructing the dams across the San Juan. Several engineers of note at that time not favorably disposed to the Nicaragua route made many inquiries, with the view of developing its difficulties and its inferiority, and became so well informed as to adopt it as the route offering relatively the fewest difficulties, and in the end certainty of execution. These engineers were found afterward among those who abstained from voting.

On the second general meeting of the Congress, May 19, Sir John Hawkshaw, of England, whose reputation as an hydraulic engineer is second to none, was present. The afternoon was taken up in a desultory discussion of the Panama route by Lieutenants Wyse and Reclus, of the French Navy. A considerable part of the discourse was directed to the Nicaragua route, which was not under discussion.

DIFFICULTIES OF THE PANAMA ROUTE.

It will be remembered that previous to last Autumn, after making an examination of the valleys of the streams falling into the Bay of San Miguel in 1876–'77, and visiting that region the following season, Lieutenant Wyse made plans and estimates for two routes, the one preferred by him, called the Tayra-Tupisa route, which by his report was supposed equal, or nearly so, to any that had been developed through our surveys. This line seemed to me hopeless, from the existence of the gravest difficulties, some of which I mentioned in my paper of November last. It seems, from what I shall presently quote, that Lieutenant Wyse had the frankness to inform the Society for which he was acting that in his view a ship canal across that region was impossible. He did not present it at all in the Congress, but took up the Panama route on whatever information he had, and developed it for a ship canal *à niveau*, which certainly was a step in the right direction. It may be said without dispute that for a canal at the ocean level the line from Panama to Aspinwall is far preferable to any other. The possibility of it must be considered simply in a commercial sense, as a canal, wherever made, must have that condition. The following day, May 20, Civil Engineer Menocal was invited to explain the plans and estimates of the Panama route, but was so interrupted by questions that Sir John Hawkshaw suggested allowing him to proceed and making questions afterward.

He stated that when Commander Lull and party began the survey of the Panama route there was no preoccupation as to what height above the sea, if any, would be selected as the summit level. They found at Matachin that the floods of the river passed some five or six feet over the railroad track, and that at low water the surface of the stream was forty-two feet above the ocean-level. In considering the question it became apparent that if the ocean-level were adopted, an excavation would be necessary, making the normal surface of the proposed canal forty-two feet below the present low water in the river, which would then make a small cascade, and in periods of floods would be transformed into a cataract of 161,000 cubic feet per second, of a height of nearly seventy-eight feet, the decrease being due to the measure of the velocity of the water as it approached the precipice, and also to the head of water above the ocean level after falling, which would give a corresponding velocity on its course to the sea. It was apparent that either this great volume of water must be received into the canal from an elevation which would make the effect destructive, or that it would be necessary to lock up so as to permit the floods to pass beneath the aqueduct, thus bringing the surface level of the water in it to an elevation of 124 feet above the sea. This was found to entail the construction of a feeder, with its adjuncts, at a cost of $9,942,727, with either a doubtful or a scant water supply during a portion of the seasons of unusual drought.

On concluding, Mr. Menocal stated his willingness to answer any questions, without eliciting any more.

On the 21st another general session was held. Sir John Hawkshaw gave his opinion on the Panama route. * * * In a conversation with him before he left Paris, after two days' attendance at the Congress, he expressed the opinion that the canal could not be excavated *à niveau*, and if it were that it would be filled up with trees and silt.

A pamphlet by M. d'Avezac, Chief Engineer of the Suez Canal, compares that canal with the various routes proposed across this continent. He quotes at length from my last paper read before this society showing the marked contrast of physical conditions, the region of the Suez Canal having a mean annual rainfall of less than two inches, while the region of the Panama canal has a rainfall of 124 inches. His deduction is that surface drainage falling into a canal, has a scouring effect which is beneficial, while the abrasion of the banks of a canal is far more destructive. Were it not too great a tax on your patience, I would point out the fallacy of such an argument. It is assumed that when a river as the Chagres is dredged it will change its regimen. This deduction is necessary to a supposition that a canal *à niveau* at Panama is possible.

During the sittings of the Congress, I found myself frequently obliged to dissent from the propositions of Commander Schirdze, United States Navy, who strangely enough was found in the Congress without being named by our Government. This officer had been the chief of large parties who were engaged during the seasons of 1870, 1871 and 1873 in examining the coast lying south and east of the Panama route, at San Blas, Caledonia Bay, the streams flowing from the flanks of the mountains, adjacent to the Bay of San Miguel and of the counter slopes falling into the Atlantic, also in making an examination of the Atrato-Napipi route for a ship canal, which will be found in his report to the Secretary of the Navy, of June 12, 1873. * * *

This was one of several occasions that I had to suggest the advantage of discussing facts instead of indulging in fancies calculated to deceive the credulous and unwary, and absolutely a waste of time in discussing.

PURPOSE OF CALLING THE CONGRESS.

Admiral Ammen says that the Congress was not called to decide upon the best routes for an interoceanic ship canal, but only upon what was possible via Panama. He adds:

"I quote M. de Lesseps: 'That which struck us most is the enthusiasm of the United States of America in favor of the establishment of a canal at Panama.' We may ask with surprise, when and where was this enthusiasm manifested? I saw nothing of it, so far as my observation extended; nor was it conveyed by the Government of the United States in sending me to examine the plan for Panama, and to submit others made under its orders, as a work for the calmest practical comparison."

I again quote M. de Lesseps: "Since forty years I have studied the question (of the Suez Canal). I have always understood that, for a profit, it is necessary to receive at the least 10 francs per ton. One can perfectly well make the American canal pay double that amount, whatever project may be brought about. These (are) considerations that one is very glad to know for the future."

The report of the Commission on Statistics of the Congress gives the tonnage likely to pass through the canal, as follows:

That of the United States	2,000,000 tons
That of Great Britain	1,050,000 tons
That of France	356,000 tons
That of all other Powers	356,000 tons

Looking at it as a plain business matter, could we not submit the question to the citizens of the two powers first named, whether it would not be worth while to consider the construction of a canal on a commercial basis, and with reference to a careful examination of all the points involved; and if found practicable in that view, do the work, and if otherwise, develop through the United States and the Canadas such additional railroads as would ameliorate the commerce of which they are so largely the factors? A resolution was introduced to conform to the wishes, as expressed, of M. de Lesseps. It is as follows:

"The Congress considers that the piercing of an interoceanic canal at a constant level, so desirable in the interests of commerce and navigation, is possible, and that a maritime canal, to respond to an indispensable facility of access and utilization which a work of this kind should offer, should be located between the Gulf of Limon and the Bay of Panama."

The official vote, as given in the proceedings, is as follows: Not voting, 12; against the resolution, 8; in favor of it, 78. The most significant figure is omitted. As counted up on the record, 36 were absent, among whom were a considerable number of engineers of note, and perhaps half a dozen delegates who were not in attendance during the session.

Engineers in other branches would naturally adopt the opinions of the hydraulic engineers, and, so far as their consciences would permit, be disposed to support the opinions and wishes of M. de Lesseps, especially if expressed emphatically. They would say very properly, the execution of the work was for M. de Lesseps, and not at all their affair. He had asked them to say that the canal *a niveau* was possible, and they had obligingly done so. He did not think it worth while to ask his honorable confreres if they thought Panama the best canal route; indeed, it would not have been prudent to do so, as he had determined that the canal should be built at Panama, *a niveau*; as expressed by an engineer very much in his confidence, "If they found it possible, the first thing was to get the money; the next was to build the canal in the best manner that they found possible." Even a great general needs the "sinews of war"; the public who made the demand through M. de Lesseps to have a canal *a niveau* should not desert him so cruelly; he has met them fully half-way in reducing the cost of construction one-half, as given by the Congress, and is still further shortening the time for the construction of the work as given in his provincial tours, beyond that assigned by him in the commission on the 26th.

OBJECTIONABLE FEATURES OF THE SCHEME.

The Canal Company agrees to transport gratuitously all persons in the civil and military service of Colombia, their baggage, arms and ammunition, and if the company is not provided with vessels suitable for their transportation, to pay their passages, and for the transportation of armaments and ammunition.

The Government of Colombia is to receive semi-annually 5 per cent of the gross receipts of the company for the first twenty-five years, 6 per cent for the second twenty-five years, 7 per cent for the third twenty-five years, and for the remaining twenty-four years 8 per cent, at the end of which time the canal reverts to the Colombian Government.

The company is "authorized to reserve 10 per cent of the shares for the benefit of the founders and aiders of the enterprise."

The only hope for a stockholder would seem to be in the extraordinary impost of 10 francs per cubic metre, not on the gross tonnage or weight of the vessel and cargo, but upon the cubical contents of a parallelopiped represented by the length, breadth and draught of the vessel! Lieutenant Wyse supposed that this measurement might amount to 50 francs per ton, which, if imposed on ordinary cargoes at ordinary prices, as wheat, would make a voyage from San Francisco around Cape Horn preferable in economy.

When Lieutenant Wyse was before a Commission in the Congress he was questioned as to the Panama Railroad and its franchises, and replied that he had made a satisfactory arrangement, by which the Canal Company would gain two millions of francs yearly, but gave no further explanation as to the arrangement.

GENERAL GRANT'S INTEREST IN THE MATTER.

So far, in general, we have been regarding the aspects of the interoceanic canal question from other points of view than our own, with occasional objections or remarks thereon. Let us now look at the question from our point of view.

The public is aware of the willingness of General Grant to assist in the great work of an interoceanic canal under such conditions of organization of a company and of a concession as would enable it to be prosecuted vigorously and effectively. He has given the subject his careful attention for years; is well satisfied as to the Nicaraguan route, which possesses a certainty of realization by development; he appreciates fully the great importance of the construction of the ship canal for the commerce of the world, and especially for the full development of our West coast.

It is gratifying to observe that there is an universal expression of opinion as to the advantage which the construction of the canal would derive from having General Grant at its head. The expression is unanimous that it would insure an economical, intelligent, and vigorous prosecution of the work, and its completion within the shortest time, and that it would have all of the conditions of practical utility and permanency that could be secured.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE SAN BLAS ROUTE.

A letter was read from W. W. Evans, an engineer who has spent many years on the Isthmus of Panama. He expressed decided opinions in favor of the San Blas route, which he said was acknowledged to be the best by all engineers who have lived for any length of time upon the Isthmus. The Nicaragua project, if pursued, would result in a complete failure. A letter was read from Frederick Kelley, in which he wrote:

Twenty-seven years study of the question and an extensive intercourse with men engaged in the shipping interest of the country and Europe have convinced me that a short sea level canal, with good safe harbor, which will require no dredging and other improvements to keep open, and which can be reached safely at all times on a wide open sea, is what the commerce of the world demands and will have sooner or later, cost what it may.

These important and necessary conditions the Nicaragua route does not afford, as it is 180 miles long, requires eighteen or twenty locks, so liable to get out of order in the wet, Isthmus climate, and has no good natural harbors on either ocean.

The San Blas route, surveyed by Messrs. McDougal, Sweet, Foreman, Rude and Fountain in 1864, and partially examined by Commodore Selfridge in 1871, is but about thirty miles long, of which ten miles is the Bayano River, easily for a trifling expense made navigable for ship navigation, thus leaving only twenty miles for canalization. Of this, however, seven miles must be a tunnel, which the engineering skill of the day, with steam and compressed air drills now in use, can make without serious difficulty, the same as they have the Hoosac, Mont Cenis, St. Gothard and other tunnels in this country and Europe, which twenty-five years ago, with the old mode of hand-drilling, would have been thought impracticable.

In attempting to solve so great a problem as that of which is the best and only route for a ship-canal, it is important that additional surveys should be made, especially of the San Blas route, which is much the shortest of all proposed. And by this means a lower and shorter pass will be found by flanking the sugar-loaf shaped hills, which extend through that part of the Isthmus. The party should be in charge of a competent army officer like General N. Michler, who in 1858, by order of Congress, made the very creditable and able survey of the Atrato-Truando route for a canal without locks via the Atrato Valley.

As we are building the canal for all time, and to satisfy the ever expanding wants of commerce, it is the height of folly to locate it where dangerous floods and almost bottomless swamps will destroy it, and thus render useless the undertaking and involve the expenditure of millions of money spent in vain.

The safest and most reliable material to excavate in that country is rock, and the more miles of rock the canal passes through the more safe and durable will be the structure, the less walling will be required to keep the banks from falling in, and less will be the cost of maintenance after the work is finished. Of about 30,000,000 of cubic yards of material to be removed on the San Blas route (which is much less than on any other route excepting the Atrato-Napipi) about 25,000,000 are rock, and hence the canal located there would be more safe and solid and cost very much less to maintain it in the future. This in the long run of years is of very great importance to the stockholders, as every railroad man in the country fully comprehends. If it costs all the receipts to maintain the work where will the shareholders get their anticipated dividends?

DIFFICULTIES WITH THE TUNNEL.

Letters were also read from Nathan Appleton, of Boston