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The Panama Canal, circa 1915.

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THE PANAMA CANAL- A MORAL ISSUE.

The greatest feat of engineering since the dawn of modern science is nearing completion. The Panama Canal is at last becoming a reality and a fact. What man is there, the pure wells of whose soul have not as yet been ~~poiled~~ ^{soiled} by the turbid currents of modern doubt and cynicism, that does not experience the lift and the thrill of holy emotions when he listens to this stirring epic of human aspiration and achievement. For he who evaluates man's acts not by their physical manifestations alone but by those less self-evident though vastly more significant spiritual forces that inspire them, sees in the Panama Canal more than a mere metonymy for an age of steam and steel. It is not a broad commentary on man's brawn and mechanical ingenuity alone. It is rather another inspiring instance of the fullness and richness of man's life, of the deep well of innate potentialities within him as yet scarcely tapped by the drills of endeavor and of the spirit of that "Everlasting Yea" which forever urges him on unto higher levels and wider visions. The Panama Canal is a triumph of man's will over the brute forces of nature. It is a victory for the unquenchable enthusiasm, the wide-sweeping ambitions, the indomitable courage and the undying faith of humanity.

Of what far-reaching importance this colossal work of our age will be, what influence it will exert upon the commercial and intellectual world of the future can now be but faintly inferred. This great highway of commerce through which there shall stream unchecked the trade of the whole world may, in time, become the broad channel through which the culture and civilization of Europe and America will flow into and mingle with the dormant civilization of the far East and will inspire it with new life and activity. It may serve as a powerful link to draw into closer relationship the peoples of the East and the peoples of the West and by means of this closer relationship a better understanding may set in among the nations,

the clouds of vague and unwarranted distrust that hover threateningly on the international horizon may be dispersed and that lurking suspicion and fear which find expression in the bloated outlays for armament that are driving the world headlong into bankruptcy and revolution may be dispelled.

The Pacificists of the world, those chosen few of us whom "God has whispered in the ear", those men of vision who have looked beyond the raging and the clashing of nations and have caught a strain of the divine harmony of His universe, hopefully looked upon the Panama Canal as a powerful factor in the realization of the noblest ideal of our century- Peace.

And yet some of us, incited by a wild and rampant jingoism and for certain inexplicable reasons terrified into a blind patriotism, have crushed this potential power for good in it, and under the cover of the oft-proclaimed and long-exploded theory of "armed-peace" have branded this spot, which might have been saved for the forces of truth and justice, with the shame and the mockery of our civilization- War.

We fortified the Panama Canal.

That the fortification of the Panama Canal was a political blunder, an economic waste and a moral wrong, we are loathe to acknowledge. But who can doubt it? The world has given its verdict in no uncertain terms. A change of attitude on the part of the great European powers towards us has set in. We ourselves are beginning to experience the regret that inevitably follows the wilful neglect of a great opportunity.

An opportunity was offered to us to establish our claim of being in the vanguard of the great movement for universal peace. With sincerity in deed as well as in creed, how much of that baneful suspicion and distrust which nations mutually entertain could we not have disarmed! The powerful nations of the world would have been quick to realize the grave moral responsibility that was imposed upon them by such an unprecedented act of faith and trust. They would have responded with as much if not with greater en-

thusiasm. Ours was the privilege of erecting another pillar in the sacred temple of Human Brotherhood. But we had not fed the lamp of our national patriotism with the oil of greater idealism so that when the bridegroom of opportunity came we did not go forth to meet him. We succumbed to suspicions, and groundless fears overpowered our better judgment.

Our deliberate disregard for the higher principles of national ethics, however, did not stop here. To cover the expense of maintaining the Panama Canal we determined upon a toll to be paid by all ships that may, in the future, use it; but in defiance of all international amenities and in violation of treaty obligations we exempted our coastwise shipping from the payment of these tolls. We were a party to the Hays-Pauncefote Treaty of 1901, which expressly prohibits such a measure, but by means of a liberal indulgence in quibbling and casuistry, we succeeded in interpreting the text of the treaty to suit our own purposes, pitifully wounding, thereby, our national pride and invoking the anger and resentment of a whole world.

President Wilson, voicing the saner opinion of the American people, has asked Congress to repeal the exemption clause in the Panama Bill. It is not the bad financial policy of such an act that forms the keynote of Mr. Wilson's appeal, although Col. Goethals has testified before Congress that the canal would not pay for itself if the U.S. ships were exempted from paying the tolls, and that this would necessitate either an increase in the toll rates or an annual subsidy of millions of dollars on the part of the American people. Pres. Wilson urges a far more significant reason for the repeal of this clause. To quote his own words:

"I ask this of you in support of the foreign policy of the Administration. I shall not know how to deal with other matters of even greater delicacy and nearer consequence if you do not grant it to me in ungrudging measure".

The violation of the Hays-Pauncefote Treaty will inevitably embarrass our foreign policy. Proofs of this assertion are already forthcoming. The refusal of Great Britain and Germany to participate in the Panama Pacific Exposition can be explained on no other ground but on that of retaliation. At some more critical moment this attitude might assume far more formidable proportions.

Great Britain is entirely justified in the indignation which she has manifested. The Editor of the "Independent" sums up quite adequately the attitude of Great Britain toward the United States heretofore:

"Great Britain relinquished her equal right under the Clayton-Bulwer Beliver Treaty to control any Isthmian Canal.

"Great Britain allowed the Hays-Pauncefote Treaty as originally agreed upon to be modified so as to permit us to fortify the Canal Zone.

"Great Britain submitted peacefully to the loss of Colombian oil fields, although she needs oil badly.

"Great Britain has given us a free hand in Mexico although her interests there are great."

And yet when England asked us to submit this question of tolls to arbitration we, knowing full well that any unbiassed tribunal would decide the case against us, curtly refused. In place of acting in a spirit of graceful condescension in accordance with our traditional ideals of justice and equity, in place of gaining for our country the esteem and admiration of the whole world by an act which would have attested to our uncompromising devotion to principles even at the cost of personal loss, we hid this talent of opportunity deep in the dirt of avarice and conceit, too distrustful of man to place it on the market of human progress.

An opportunity has now been offered us to vindicate our name and to redeem ourselves and withal to help the cause of international peace. For to settle the toll problem justly and amicably would be a tremendous gain.

for the interests of Peace. It would join the United States and Great Britain in bonds of friendship stronger than they had ever been before. It would serve as an inspiration unto other peoples to set justice above policy, truth above expect^{die}ancy, peace above war.

And it is our sacred duty to do it! We must make all other considerations subservient to this all-embracing and noblest one—the mission of the American People.

Friends!— The dawn of a new era in the history of mankind is now breaking. We are on the threshold of that glorious day when the beautiful dream and holy hope of mankind will be realized and established:

"And they shall beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning-knives, nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Man's heart has been cleansed and purified; man's soul has been tried in the crucible of pain and blood and shattered hopes. The Kingdom of Heaven is near, the Kingdom of Heaven here upon earth.

And, methinks, that God has sent us, the people of the future, the people whose land is the melting pot for the races of Man and whose soil, unpolluted by centuries of greed and hatred is bringing forth a new and nobler type of manhood to incorporate the ideals of the world, methinks that God has sent us as messengers before His face to prepare the way before it, announce the coming of dawn.

More than a century ago, we brought another message to the startled world— good tidings of freedom and emancipation. And a voice ran through the multitudes of the people, "Surely a great prophet is arisen among us and God has visited his people"

We had then been consecrated to the will of Him whose finger moves through the records of man and whose spirit guides Mankind "to that far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves". We were then called

upon to preach unto the world and to realize in our own lives the divine law of justice and human equality. We are now called upon to preach unto the world and to realize in our own lives the highest ideal of Mankind,- Peace, Love, Brotherhood.

Shall we now, in the hour of trial, when we are called upon to bear testimony to our divine calling, when our manhood and sincerity are put to the test, when the whole world is anxiously awaiting the outcome of this struggle between manhood and cowardice, trust and faithlessness, conviction and doubt, shall we now shirk our duty and forego our privilege and shamefacedly acknowledge our weakness and failure?

We do not for a moment doubt the outcome of this struggle. We have implicit faith in the higher consciousness of the American people. The Panama Canal- the triumph of human skill and intelligence over the stubborn forces of nature will also mark a most inspiring triumph of spiritual progress and higher morality over the brutal forces in mankind.

Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of God.

It will be a pledge of good faith, an ensign of brotherhood, an inspiration and a trust to Mankind.