

VARIOUS

THE GREAT ROUND
WORLD AND WHAT IS
GOING ON IN IT, VOL. 1,
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There is a new cause for supposing that the Treaty with Great Britain will either be defeated in the Senate, or else delayed for some time to come.

This new trouble concerns the building of the Nicaragua Canal.

It seems a remote cause, does it not? but it only shows how closely the affairs of one nation are bound up with those of all the others. No matter what our speech, our climate, or our color, we are all a portion of the great human family, and the good of one is the good of all.

The Nicaragua Canal is a water-way that will cross the narrow neck of land that makes Central America. It will connect the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean.

With the help of such a canal, ships in going to the western coast of North or South America will not need to make the long and dangerous voyage around Cape Horn.

Cape Horn, you will see if you look on your map, is the extreme southerly point of South America.

There are so many storms and fogs there, that the Horn, as it is called, is much dreaded by sailors.

Since the invention of steam, all the steamships go through the Straits of Magellan, and save the passage round the Horn; but there is not enough wind for sailing vessels in the rocky and narrow straits, so they still have to take the outside passage.

The Straits of Magellan divide the main continent of South America from a group of islands, called Tierra del Fuego, and Cape Horn is the most southerly point of this archipelago.

The journey down the coast of South America on the east, and up again on the west, takes such a long time, that the desire for a canal across the narrow neck of land which joins North and South America has been in men's minds for many years.

A railway was built across the Isthmus of Panama to shorten the distance, and save taking the passage round the Horn. Travellers left their ship at one side of the Isthmus, and took the train over to the other, where they went on board another ship, which would take them the rest of their journey.

This plan greatly increased the expense of the journey, and the canal was still so much wanted, that at last the Panama Canal was begun.

You have all heard about the Panama Canal, which was to do the same work that the Nicaragua Canal is to do, that is, to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. You have probably heard how much time, labor, and human life was wasted over it, and how much trouble its failure caused in France.

This Canal was to cut across the Isthmus at its very narrowest point. It was worked on for years, every one believing that it would be opened to ships before very long. Many of the maps and geographies that were printed in the eighties said that the Panama Canal would be opened in 1888, or at latest in 1889.

No one expected what afterward happened. In 1889 the works were stopped for want of money; the affairs of the Canal were looked into; it was found that there had been dishonesty and fraud, and in 1892 the great Count Ferdinand de Lesseps, who built the Suez Canal, and a number of other prominent Frenchmen, were arrested for dealing dishonestly with the money subscribed for the Canal.

There was a dreadful scandal; many of the high French officials had to give up their positions, and run away for fear of arrest.

When the whole matter was understood, it was found that, for months before the work was stopped, the men who had charge of the Canal had decided that the work would cost such an enormous sum of money that it would be almost an impossibility to complete it.

They did not have the honesty to let this be known, but allowed people to go on subscribing money, a part of which they put in their own pockets, and spent the rest in bribing the French newspapers not to tell the truth about the Canal.

The worst of it was, that the money which had been subscribed was not from rich people, who would feel its loss very little, but from poor people, who put their savings, and the money they were storing away for their old age, into the Canal; and when they lost it, it meant misery and poverty to them.

So the Panama Canal failed.

But the project of making a canal was not given up. Two years before the idea of digging at Panama had been thought of, the ground where the Nicaragua Canal is being built had been surveyed, and thought better suited to the purpose than Panama.

The reason for this was, that at Panama a long and deep cut had to be made through the mountains. This had to be done by blasting, in much the same way that the rocks are cleared away to build houses. This is a long and tedious work.

The Nicaragua Canal will be 159 miles long, while the Panama, if it is ever completed, will be only 59 miles; but of these 159 miles, 117 are through the Nicaragua Lake and the San Juan River—water-ways already made by nature. For the remaining distance, there are other river-beds that will be used, and only 21 miles will actually have to be cut through.

The main objection to this route for the Canal is, that there is a volcano on an island in the Nicaragua Lake, and there are always fears of eruptions and earthquakes in the neighborhood of volcanoes. A great eruption of the volcano might change the course of a river, or alter the face of the country so much, that the Canal might have to be largely remade.

The building of this Canal will cost hundreds of millions of dollars—two hundred millions, it is said.

Nicaragua is not a rich-enough country to be able to pay for this, and it is here that the subject touches the closest interests of other countries, and is serious enough to overthrow a much-desired treaty.

If the Canal is to be built, it must be built by a country rich enough to pay for it.

The country which builds the Canal will have the right to collect a toll from every vessel passing through, and also to defend it, and prevent the ships of an enemy from using it.

The United States is naturally anxious to be the country that controls the Canal. But England does not appear to want us to have entire control.

England owns the greater part of the Suez Canal, which joins the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. This Canal, you will see by looking at the map, makes a short cut to Asia, and saves ships the long journey round Africa and the Cape of Good Hope.

England finds this Canal very useful; it makes a great deal of money for her, and she would like to have just as large a share of the Nicaragua Canal That is at least what the Senators say.

When the Treaty was mentioned in the Senate, Senator Morgan at once demanded that his Nicaragua Canal Bill should be acted upon.

His bill provides that the United States Government shall furnish the money for the Canal, and in return shall own nearly the whole of it, and have the right to say who shall have charge of its affairs.

No sooner had his request been made in the Senate, than a protest came from Mr. Rodriguez, the Minister for the Greater Republic of South America, who was received by President Cleveland a week or two ago.

He said that Nicaragua would not consent to any such arrangement, and would not allow the United States to have so much control of the Canal. He added that if Senator Morgan's bill were passed, Nicaragua would not allow the building of the Canal to go on without entirely new arrangements.

The Senators are very angry about this. They think that Nicaragua has been told to say this by England, to prevent the matter of the Canal being settled before the Arbitration Treaty is made with England.

They say if the Treaty is accepted in its present form, and ratified before the Nicaragua Canal Bill is passed, England will have the right to take a hand in the Canal question.

An interest in the Nicaragua Canal would give England a right to use both the short water-ways of the world, and, with her great navy, it would give her rights that might be very dangerous to us.

The excitement about the Canal has taken away all hope of the Treaty being acted upon by Congress this session. When it does come up, the Senators intend to have it so worded that the Nicaraguan affairs cannot be interfered with by England.

The idea of the Treaty seemed a splendid thing for us, and all lovers of peace will grieve if some satisfactory understanding is not arrived at; but we must not neglect our own best interests.

There is a good deal being said about King Oscar of Sweden and Norway being chosen as the umpire, in case the members of the Arbitration Committee are unable to agree.

Many people are saying that King Oscar would not make a fair umpire, and that he would lean to the side of England in every matter that came up.

A treaty was made in Stockholm, in 1855, between Sweden and Norway, and France and England, which they say binds King Oscar to agree with England.

This treaty said that the King of Sweden agreed not to sell to Russia, or allow her to use, any portion of his kingdom; and that if Russia made any offers for land, the King of Sweden was to tell England and France at once.

England and France, in return for this, promised to help Sweden with men and ships in case of any trouble with Russia.

This treaty is not binding any longer. France has put it aside, and has made friends with Russia on her own account. It would not be possible for her to keep to her agreement if she wished to.

The old agreement being broken, England and Sweden will have to make a new one, to bind them together again.

Nothing has been heard of such a treaty, so it is to be supposed that none exists.

In this case, there is no reason why Oscar of Sweden should not be the umpire chosen.

It would, of course, be more agreeable to us if the umpire were not a European ruler. England would be sure to object to an American umpire, and neither Asia nor Africa could give us a person capable of filling the office, so it looks very much as though the only person to be found, who understands diplomacy well enough to be of use, would be a European sovereign.

If the umpire must be such a person, King Oscar of Sweden is the most desirable of them all. He is, besides, almost the only European ruler who is free to accept the office.

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