

THE PANAMA AND NICARAGUA CANALS.

THE marvelous presumption of our neighbors on the south is startling indeed. It is understood, so a contemporary informs us, that their government has been negotiating to obtain from Columbia the rights and charters which the French Panama Company has forfeited. Formerly, national pride had, it seems, established a bitterly jealous lack of faith in the possibility of the scheme. The first thing to be done, therefore, is to get several preliminary facts settled. The highest American authority we have said, has for years taught us that the Panama scheme was an engineering impossibility, and a commercial myth. We have been led to believe that that irresistible torrent, (during the rainy season) known as the Chagres river, could not be diverted. We have been assured that vexing calms in the neighborhood of Panama would make the canal worthless for vessels propelled by sails, even if it could be satisfactorily constructed. All these fancies must now be bravely expelled from mind. America has a national God peculiar to itself, and one it worships beyond all else. Its name is Ingenuity, and its greatest strength, faith in its own importance. It is unquestionably true that in several quarters it is now seriously proposed to resume work where the French Company left off. This company had an "American Committee," and managed cutely enough, to dissipate a very large portion of its carelessly squandered funds in the committee's country. The writer has personally long been aware that certain classes of dredging machinery manufactured in the states, was far more elaborate and expensive than reasonable economic methods would seem desirable. The truth of the matter was that they chose rather to adopt new and untried patents, because of some fancied improvements, that were costly in the extreme, than to use the old and proven successes, that were far more economical. It is worthy of note that the American committee were disposed to keep the Monroe Doctrine quiet, and to bring it to pass that the French should build and

control the canal without protest from their government, and without the creation of ill-feeling by their press.

We quote from a recently published review. "The ventilation of the company's profligate and criminal record in Paris has naturally awakened much interest in the *modus operandi* of its American Committee. Very properly, Congress decided to investigate. However difficult it may be to get at some of the facts desired, it is earnestly to be wished that Mr. Fellows' committee may probe to the very bottom, and follow every clue to its utmost extremity. The public ought to know all about that American Committee, just what services it undertook to render, and just what money its members pocketed for those services."

With respect to the Nicaragua Canal, it would seem wise that the government, in case it should decide to leave Panama alone, or better in any case, should take it upon itself to complete its construction, and assume its management in the future. The scandals in France must prove an ominous warning to private promoters of all such gigantic enterprises. If any inaccuracies may have been made in the past management of the Nicaragua Company there is still time to retrace and correct.

The Nicaragua Company have been dallying about their work in a manner that is exasperating in the extreme. We were promised the completion of the canal by 1896. As matters now stand this would be an utter impossibility. For some time past we have been assured that phenomenal progress in the construction has been made, and it was thought that no appeal for aid would have to be made to the government. We were informed that the French had deserted Panama, and that much of their machinery had been bought at ruinous prices and transferred to the works at the more northern canal. Perhaps this tedious delay may be accepted as evidence of the fact that something is radically wrong behind the scenes. The truth would indeed be interesting. There must be a canal, but let it be built, by all means, on an honorable and substantial basis. Again we would say, let the United States government presume to complete the work already begun. It can do so,