

Prominent Topics.

The Universal Language Dream.

Our esteemed contemporary, the New York Evening Post says:—"The death of the inventor of Volapuk, far from coinciding with the triumph of his dream of a universal language, merely reminds the public that he was the first, at all events in our time, to have such a dream. The idea has so much to recommend it that it is impossible for an enthusiast to understand how it is that the world does not take a day off to master the new language, particularly since it will teach itself to you if you will only give it a chance. But most persons do not easily pick up a strange tongue, and in this country, with its immense stretch from ocean to ocean, occupied by a population speaking a common language already, a proposal for a universal language strikes all but a very few as superfluous."

The fact that such a mixed population as that of this continent already speaks a common language seems to show both the necessity for and the possibility of a universal language. The universal language of the not very distant future will probably be a development of English enriched from many other languages, but it will be a growth of a natural development, as is the English of to-day. The only thing to retard it is the interference of language and spelling reformers who, by their reforms, may create artificial obstacles to a beneficent natural tendency. The most scientific attempt at a new language is Esperanto, which, however, does not aspire to be "the" universal language, but rather an auxiliary to all languages, to facilitate international intercourse without aiming to supersede any of the existing tongues.

No Banking System.

Mr. Andrew Carnegie in an article in Leslie's Weekly says that in the United States they have "no banking system, only a series of banks." He continues:—"In Europe they don't have panics. They control them there, so that they harm no one. We can do it here. Why not? The problem is simple enough. If the people would only interest themselves, they would grasp the idea and want to know more. Then, when they understood how the matter strikes home—home to the family exchequer and livelihood—they would rise up and demand that Congress give them a reform law at once. In every other country they have a system of banking co-operation. We have no banking system, but only a series of banks. Individually they are sound, splendid institutions, of great service ordinarily to their communities. But when trouble comes, instead of being allowed to join hands all over the country and present a great bulwark of defense, every bank is forced to turn against its own customers and wreck them. What a stupendous error!"

A Road Congress.

An interesting meeting to be held in Atlantic City in the last week of September and the first five days of October is the American Road Congress. The members will represent highway undertakings involving the spending of about \$225,000,000 a year. In this connection may be noted that a new pro-

fession has developed, that of highway engineer. There are now in the United States eighty colleges and universities which are giving special training in the profession of highway engineering. In most cases this department of engineering is an incident in the general training of engineers. But it is now realized that all over the United States demand has arisen for the construction of perfected highways, not merely for the sake of automobiles, but to reduce the cost of transporting crops from the farms.

Some of these universities will be represented at the Congress. The great popular interest in good roads, which has developed in recent years, is no doubt chiefly due to the automobiles, but experience of good roads has taught the farmers that there is money in road improvement for them, and the railroads also find that good roads bring them more freight than bad ones.

Panama Canal Problems.

The Panama Canal Bill promises to raise a number of embarrassing questions to be settled by the American courts and disputed over by American interests besides the paramount question of the inviolability of the International Treaty under which the canal is being constructed. One clause reads:

"From and after the first day of July, 1914, it shall be unlawful for any railroad company or other common carrier subject to the act to regulate commerce to own, lease, operate, control, or have any interest whatsoever (by stock ownership or otherwise, either directly, indirectly, through any holding company, or by stockholders or directors in common, or in any other manner) in any common carrier by water operated through the Panama canal or elsewhere with which said railroad or other carrier aforesaid does or may compete for traffic, or any vessel carrying freight or passengers upon said water route or elsewhere; and in case of violation of this provision each day in which such violation continues shall be deemed a separate offence."

Another clause reads: "No tolls shall be levied upon vessels engaged in the coastwise trade of the United States." As foreign-owned ships are forbidden to engage in trade between American ports, the new law can only apply to ships owned by American railway companies, and will incidentally prevent them from competing with the railways owned by the same companies, whatever that prohibition may be worth to the public. The Canadian Pacific will not be injured by the clause because it is not amenable to any American laws regarding the ownership of vessels by railway companies and will not lose any American coastwise trade, because it has none to lose. The C. P. R. may, however, be in a better position than some of the American lines which are required to dispossess themselves of their steamships. The phrase 'does or may compete for traffic' promises to find work for the lawyers for many years to come. What constitutes competition for Panama Canal traffic? The Northern Transcontinental railways will carry off lots of the business which but for them might go through the Isthmus. Every railway in the country carrying freight to the Atlantic or Pacific coast competes with the canal.