CHAPTER XVII.

POLITICAL QUESTIONS.—NO. IV. BRITISH AND AMERICAN VIEWS.—THE BEST SOLUTION.

Mr. Frelinghuysen follows Mr. Blaine's arguments.—Lord Granville's exposition of the British views.—Weakness of the American position in the correspondence and strength of its case on general grounds.—A second canal under American exclusive control the best solution for a difficult position.

On May 8, 1882, Mr. Frelinghuysen replied to Lord Granville's despatches to Mr. Blaine, dated January 7 and 14, already sketched in Chapter XVI. He repeats the previous American declarations that for the United States it is "unnecessary and unwise, through an invitation to the nations of the earth, to guarantee the neutrality of the transit of the isthmus, or to give their navies a pretext for assembling in waters contiguous to our shores, or to possibly involve this Republic in conflicts from which its natural position entitles it to be relieved."

Treaties are harmless or useless in time of peace; but when wars come it is impossible to enforce them. Such agreements, moreover, would lead to political intervention in American affairs, "which," says Mr. Frelinghuysen, "the traditional policy of the United States makes it impossible that the President should either consent to or look upon with indifference. . . . . The formation of a protectorate by European nations over the isthmus transit would be in conflict with a doctrine which has been for many years asserted by the United States . . . . which

opposes any intervention by European nations in the political affairs of American republics."

Entering upon the discussion of the questions concerning the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, the Secretary writes at a very great length to show that the convention was made for a particular object which has since ceased to exist; that Great Britain to this day, and, contrary to its provisions, maintains a colony in Honduras, so that the treaty is voidable at the pleasure of the United States, as it has been broken by Great Britain; and, finally, that Art. VIII. refers merely to the lines of railway or canal which were proposed *at the time* of the treaty. We should like to be able to dispose of space enough to transcribe at least ample extracts from this exceedingly able and cogent State Paper, which reminds one of the better days of American diplomacy. We must, however, content ourselves with only a few sentences which we quote in order to show the line of argument of Mr. Frelinghuysen.

He contends that the Clayton Bulwer treaty had for its primary object not only to aid the immediate construction of the proposed Nicaragua Canal, but also *to dispossess Great Britain of settlements in Central America*, whether under cover of Indian sovereignty or otherwise.

And yet, he says, "Great Britain exercises dominion over Belize or British Honduras, the area of which is equal to that of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island." Such dominion seems to be inconsistent with the treaty of 1850. At that time the English privileges on Belize, conferred by treaties with Spain, "were confined to a right to cut wood and establish saw-mills," in a defined territory. Even if the so-called "declarations" of Sir Henry L. Bulwer, acknowledged by Mr. Clayton, regarding British "settlements" in Honduras were valid, the British Government has unlawfully ex-

tended a "settlement" to cut wood into a regular colony. But, says Mr. Frelinghuysen, the Bulwer declaration *after the conclusion of the treaty was not made nor accepted by the President and the Senate.* That declaration is not considered as part of the treaty. According to Mr. Frelinghuysen, the solemn declaration of President Buchanan in 1860 referred to the dispossession of Great Britain from one of the ends of the canal route through Nicaragua, which was accomplished by means of the treaties of 1859 and 1860. Those treaties had nothing to do with the colonization of British Honduras.

The Clayton-Bulwer treaty was entered into in view particularly of the construction of the Nicaragua Canal, for which American citizens held a concession, upon which it was meant to act when they were confronted with the British occupation of one of its ends. Mr. Frelinghuysen calls attention to the significant fact that one of the most important alterations made in the draft that Sir Henry Bulwer sent to Lord Palmerston was the addition to Art. VII. referring particularly to "any persons or company" which should at the time have made a contract for the construction of the canal with the State through which it might pass. The provisions of the first article of the treaty, regarding fortifications, control, &c., and of the second and the third up to the sixth article, refer *only* to that particular canal.

And here Mr. Frelinghuysen calls attention to Art. VII of the treaty wherein it is said to be understood that "if at the expiration of the aforesaid period" (a year after ratification) "such persons or company be not able to commence and carry out the proposed enterprise, *then* the Governments of the United States and Great Britain *shall be free to afford their protection to any other persons* that shall be prepared to commence and proceed

with the construction of the canal in question." Mr. Frelinghuysen interprets this provision in this way: "If under . . . . the seventh article the claims of the holders of this particular concession should be set aside, then each Government reserved to itself *the right to determine whether its interests required it to afford protection to the holders of any other concession.*"

The Nicaragua concession was acted upon: surveys were made by Childs, and were then submitted to a commission of Royal Engineers, and only afterwards through the lack of money the concession expired. The treaty, therefore, has, it may be argued, become obsolete.

Before the Clayton-Bulwer treaty was negotiated the United States had already the treaty of 1846–48 with Colombia. That treaty, says the late Secretary, "created a relation that cannot be superseded. . . . . A protectorate of this kind is . . . . necessarily exclusive in its character." Great Britain cannot join that protectorate, created years before the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, without the consent both of Colombia and of the United States. And should Great Britain claim the right to join in the protection of the existing railway company, or in any future Panama Canal, "the United States would submit that experience has shown that no such joint protectorate is requisite," and "that the Clayton-Bulwer treaty is subject to the provisions of the treaty of 1846 with New Granada, while it exists, which treaty obliges the United States to afford, and secures to them the sole protectorate of any transit by the Panama route."

In short, "the United States esteem themselves competent to refuse to afford their protection jointly with Great Britain," and, of course, as to inviting other nations to guarantee the canal. Mr. Frelinghuysen ends by declaring solemnly that "the United States would look

with disfavour upon an attempt at a concert of political action by the other Powers in that direction."

Lord Granville answered these arguments in a despatch, dated December 30, 1882. He denies that the treaty refers *only* to the particular route or routes then proposed, and points out once more the "general principle" of Art. VIII., wherein protection is promised to "any other practicable communications," and then "specially" to those "which are *now proposed* to be established by the way of Tehuantepec, or Panama."

As to the treaty of 1846–48 between the United States and Colombia, there is nothing in it that confers on the United States any exclusive right of protection, or which is inconsistent with the joint protection of Great Britain and the United States. The treaty means no more than the treaties of Great Britain, France, and the United States with Honduras and Nicaragua.

Lord Granville then refutes the arguments of Mr. Frelinghuysen on the violation of the treaty of 1850 on account of the British colony of Belize. British Honduras, he says, was acquired by conquest before 1850, and the United States have formally recognized the colony in 1869 as a dependency of Great Britain.

That is so; but we hardly think that Lord Granville makes good his case. The recognition of that fact does not mean that the Clayton-Bulwer treaty has *not* been violated by Great Britain, which seems to be the undoubted fact. It is not unintentionally that Lord Granville does not dwell long on the subject.

In his dispatch to Mr. West of August 17, 1883, Lord Granville returns to that point, and this time he cannot see with what justice the United States claim that the arrangement as to Honduras is a violation of the treaty

when President Buchanan expressed himself as entirely satisfied.

From the summary of the correspondence on the political control of the canal in the three last chapters, it appears that the so-called "Monroe doctrine" is not a mere vague sentiment, but a conviction deeply imbedded in Americans of all parties, and we have seen that, although they have been growing very fast as a nation, and are most prosperous, their prosperity, which has corrupted some of their political ideas, has not yet touched the "principle" that Europe is not to meddle in the political affairs of American republics. It makes no difference whether Great Britain or all the rest of the world do not admit the doctrine of Monroe; it is still cherished by the United States, and as long as they are powerful it cannot help being respected. Great Britain would not dare to take possession of Cuba—although it is still a colony of another Power—at the expense of a war with the United States. And if France should attempt to take Panama she would soon be expelled, as were the troops of Napoleon III. when he tried to found an empire in Mexico.

The "doctrine," however, has not been followed very closely in several instances, all of which are regretted by the true friends of the United States. The Clayton-Bulwer treaty is the most striking exception. Clayton wanted to dislodge Great Britain from the terminus of what was then supposed to be the only available line for a ship canal across Central America. And the consideration that he gave for that dispossession was to bind his Government by admitting Great Britian to a control in the canal and in promising to ask the different Powers of Europe and America to join in its protectorate. Yet

England was not dislodged from Greytown until 1860; neither Clayton nor the Senate took proper precautions with the wording of the treaty, and the Americans were astonished to find out that Great Britain had never meant to be dislodged. But, after all, Greytown was left to Nicaragua, although two years after that cession Great Britain created a colony in British Honduras, and to this day still keeps a colony there on the strength of an *appendix* to the treaty, which has never been approved by the President and the Senate—that is to say, by the United States—and therefore is *no part* of the treaty.

The Lesseps enterprise revived all these questions, and although Messrs. Blaine and Frelinghuysen have defended the views of their Government with ingenuity and ability, both have been more than matched by Lord Granville. The reason is very plain. The American Secretaries have followed a very bad line of attack, as the readers may see from the extracts we have given. They have tried to show that the treaty was not meant to apply to all cases of interoceanic communication, or that the treaty is voidable at pleasure because of Honduras, or that the United States treaty with Colombia conflicts with the Clayton-Bulwer, &c. Now, from all these standpoints the Foreign Office has had no difficulty (except in the Honduras case) in retorting and getting the better in the discussion with the two Secretaries.

Even supposing that Great Britain is not violating the treaty to this day, it is difficult to see why the United States should not ask for a formal abrogation of it on the general grounds that the treaty made thirty-five years ago is most unsatisfactory to the United States of this present day. Because an arrangement was made at that time—and was made against the general feeling of the country—does it follow that it should be kept up for ever?

A dual control of the canal, as that arrangement provides for, is as objectionable to the American Union as a joint guarantee of all nations. But even a dual control would be impossible. Europe can understand why the great Republic wishes to have exclusively the guardianship of a canal across the Isthmus of Panama; but France or Germany, for instance, would not consent to see England joining the protectorate without their also claiming a voice in it. If, therefore, the United States uphold the Clayton-Bulwer treaty they will have at their door a concert of nations—of rival nations—which, with their powerful navies, will compel the United States to maintain a great navy, and thus depart from their settled policy. The canal would become the most sensitive part in the political organism of the United States, and for a long time to come it will tinge their foreign policy even more than the Suez Canal has been tinging the whole foreign policy of England since it has been open. It is impossible to conceive that the United States should rest contented with a joint guarantee of countries with which they have so little in common.

As to the treaty of 1846–48 with Colombia giving the United States any particular advantages of a protectorate over the isthmus transit, it is simply an American illusion. Nothing prevents Colombia from making identical treaties with England, France and other Powers, and when the troops from Washington will one of these days land in Aspinwall, they may find French or English troops already "defending the passage" in virtue of treaty stipulations. If the canal is ever to be finished, we may be very sure that France, whose citizens will have acquired such momentous interests in Panama, will not leave them unprotected by her own guns.

Panama, and in fact Colombia, is much weaker than Egypt. The canal company will virtually control the whole State. One of the late directors of the Panama Railway told the writer of these lines that Colombia was often in debt to his company: what will not be the case with an immense enterprise such as the canal?

And what will be said of the intrigues of the French on the isthmus? Panama wants to be independent of Colombia, and at best is torn by frequent internal revolutions. Must the canal be left to French and Colombian protection?

The more this matter is studied, the more difficult of solution it seems to be for the United States, unless they, having denounced the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, should manage to have a canal of their own, over which they may have absolute control. It is the only way to reduce to a *minimum* the danger of European complications in America.

The late attempt to pass through the American Senate the treaty negotiated last year with Nicaragua—a treaty which was heartily supported by such an eminent statesman as Senator Edmunds—seems to display a true appreciation of that fact.

One of the New York papers wrote strongly against the United States owning land in a foreign country, as Nicaragua, subject to internal commotions and inhabited by so different a race. Indeed, it is not very desirable for any one to meddle with Central America; but the question which that paper should have asked itself was, which of the evils was the least—the confronting of French and European intrigues as well as native intrigues in Panama, or the owning of a belt of land along the proposed Nicaragua Canal? A Government such as that of the United States, watching over so many and such

varied interests, cannot help having trouble of some kind; but trouble will come; and to let things run as they please may meet the views of self-satisfied people, who believe in their own transcendent wisdom, but it is not government.

For our part we cannot believe that the United States will completely reverse their policy regarding European intervention in America at this late day, a policy which the writer of these lines, who is not American, thinks both wise and indispensable to their happiness. A second canal will be undertaken one of these days. We are aware that the control of an interoceanic canal falls really to the nation that has the strongest navy, and the United States at present have no navy. But not only that condition of things may not last indefinitely, but whatever disadvantage the American Union has now in that respect is counterbalanced by the great advantages of neighbourhood to the future canal—a canal held and fortified under its auspices.

On the other hand, we do not see how Great Britain can give up to the United States the absolute control of the Panama route. She has perhaps as great a commercial interest in the canal as the United States, and besides that, she has whatever advantages accrue to her from her powerful navy and from the Clayton-Bulwer treaty.

When, therefore, we weigh the interests of Great Britain and those of France with the interests, political and commercial, of the United States, we cannot help coming to the conclusion that the United States, having by the indolence of their statesmen let this canal question assume a disagreeable form, should do their best now to counteract their past errors by constructing and assuming exclusive control of a canal of their own.

In January 1880, Senator Bayard, the present Secretary of State, warned the country that the American canal "*must be under the control of the Government of the United States. Our power,*" he continued, "*may be questioned, but it will be maintained.* Every counsel of wisdom, therefore, exhorts us to seize the day, and in time of peace prepare for war, for it is the surest mode to avert it." (See the New York *Nation*, No. 762, February 5, 1880.)

It is not likely, we repeat, that Secretary Bayard will think differently from Mr. Bayard, the Senator.

The idea of a second canal, even supposing that M. de Lesseps might finish the Panama, is by no means a novel one, and it occurred to such an authority as the *Economiste Français* as early as July 1879, just when M. de Lesseps had bought M. Bonaparte-Wyse's concession from Colombia. The *Economist* (London, July 26, 1879), referring to that article of its Paris namesake, wrote as follows:—

"The dark point in the present plan is that another practical line can be made further to the north, which is not included in the concession to M. de Lesseps' company. This is the line through the republics of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. It is nearly four times as long as the other line, and it requires twenty-one locks. At neither end are there good harbours, but it can be constructed without any tunnel, and the River San Juan and the lakes of Nicaragua and of the Rio Grande can be utilized. To compare estimates of the cost of the rival routes seems of little use, as the expense of these immense undertakings is very uncertain. The *Economiste Français* looks forward to seeing both enterprises carried out, in which case it appears impossible to calculate beforehand which of the two lines may obtain the principal part of the traffic. But whether either or both of these lines are made, it appears certain

that American shipping, and not European, will be the gainer. The economy of time in the transit from the two sides of the vast continent of America, now conducted *viâ* Cape Horn, will be an enormous gain to American shipping. In the transport of goods to the Pacific coast from the ports which open into the Atlantic the gain to American ships will be very great. At present the voyage by steamer from New York to San Francisco, to Callao, to Valparaiso, to the Sandwich Islands, takes but little more time on an average than the voyage from the Channel to those ports. But when the canal is constructed the American ports will be far nearer than Caupi, as far as length of transit is concerned, than even the nearest European ports. The work, however, when completed, must be left to produce its own results. We shall accept it in England as one of the inevitable consequences of the increasing desire for increasing intercommunication, and we do not question that though, owing to the fact that American trade on the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts will benefit so largely by the improved means of transit, it is hardly likely that the proportion of English shipping will be as great as in the case of the Suez Canal, we have equally as little doubt that English enterprise will find full employment in utilizing the opportunity given it, and that England will reap the full advantage from the economy in transport which may be expected to result from the completion of the plan."