

PRESIDENT ANGRY

Bitterly Denounces Joseph Pulitzer And Demands His Punishment.

SENATE LAUGHS AT IT

Vehement Special Message Is Not Taken Seriously In Either House.

PANAMA DEAL IS DEFENDED

Mr. Roosevelt Calls The Charges A "String Of Infamous Libels"—He Says Mr. Bonaparte Is Now Considering The Method Of Prosecuting Mr. Pulitzer — "Nothing Whatever To Investigate."

President's Hot Words.

"The wickedness of the slanders is only surpassed by their fatuity."

"A string of infamous libels."

"The real offender is Mr. Joseph Pulitzer, editor and proprietor of the World."

"It is a high national duty to bring to justice this villifier of the American people, this man who wantonly and wickedly seeks to blacken the character of reputable private citizens and to convict the Government of his own country in the eyes of the civilized world of wrongdoing of the basest kind."

"The Attorney-General has under consideration the form in which the proceedings against Mr. Pulitzer should be brought."

"I am responsible for all that was done in carrying out the will of Congress, and the provisions of the law were scrupulously complied with by the Executive."

There is nothing whatever in which this Government is interested to investigate about this transaction."

Washington, Dec. 15.—President Roosevelt sent to Congress today one of the most vehement and vitriolic messages of his entire career. It excelled even his previous efforts in denouncing his opponents and critics, and no member of the Ananias Club has received such a "roasting" as today he administered to Mr. Joseph Pulitzer and others who have ventured to question the Panama Canal deal.

In the strongest possible language he characterizes the charge that a syndicate of American citizens profited by the \$40,000,000 appropriation for the purchase of the Panama Canal and all of the other allegations of irregularities in the Panama Canal deal as a "string of infamous libels." In the very outset the President heaps denunciation upon Mr. Joseph Pulitzer, proprietor of the New York World, and calls him "the real offender" and a "villifier of the American people."

The President boldly informs Congress that "there is nothing whatever in which this Government is interested to investigate about this transaction," and after declaring that the Government acquired all of the Panama Canal and railway properties at its "own valuation and price," informs Congress that "the Attorney-General has under consideration the form in which the proceedings against Mr. Pulitzer should be brought."

Relative to the action of Representative Rainey, of Illinois, who in his own right, as a member of the House of Representatives, has introduced a resolution calling for the appointment of a select committee to investigate the Panama Canal transaction, the President makes this cutting remark:

"A member of the Congress has actually introduced a resolution in reference to these charges."

MESSAGE HELD AN HOUR.

This message from Mr. Roosevelt was accorded a shabby reception in both branches of Congress. There was no disposition among members on either side to regard the communication seriously. As a matter of fact, it was treated in a jocular manner both during its reading on the floor and in the gossip with which it was discussed in the lobbies, cloakrooms and restaurants at the Capitol.

Senators laughed openly over the reading of the message, especially when the clerk hurried along to those portions of this peculiar document which referred to Mr. Pulitzer. The message and its ponderous exhibits, comprising a cubic foot of documents, paper and indices, rested upon the desk of Vice-President Fairbanks an hour before it was laid before the Senate. At the time it was received from the hands of one of the President's assistant secretaries Senator Carter, of Montana, was just commencing his speech regarding postal savings banks. Instead of immediately turning the message over to the reading clerk to be brought to the attention of the Senate, Mr. Fairbanks allowed it to remain upon his desk, and at the end of an hour laid it before the Senate.

SENATORS LAUGHED.

Most of the members were at luncheon or in the cloakrooms at this juncture, and not many were on the floor when the clerk began reading. Senator Bailey, of Texas, was crossing the rear of the chamber toward his seat, and while on his way heard the President's first reference to Mr. Pulitzer. Turning toward the reading clerk, Mr. Bailey, who was unable, like many others, to restrain his risibilities, burst forth into open laughter. Other Senators in the chamber joined him in audible laughter, which was taken up by the galleries. The news spread through the Capitol that "the President has sent in another one of those red-hot messages," and members leisurely entered the chamber to learn what it was all about. Several later points in the message were greeted with even greater laughter by Senators and the people in the galleries.

After the completion of the reading of the communication the Senate resumed the even tenor of its way, but during the afternoon the action of the President monopolized conversation wherever men met at the Capitol.

DIDN'T EXCITE THE HOUSE.

Laughter also marked the reading of portions of the message in the House, but the jocular outburst there was not quite as general as in the Senate. For the most part, members of the House paid little attention to the reading of the communication. They sat around in groups, conversing, and there was such a confusion of sound that, but for the striking voice of the reading clerk, a stranger entering the chamber would have assumed that the House was indulging in a recess. In fact, in one juncture, in the midst of all this hubbub, Mr. Stanley, of Kentucky, rose and inquired of the Speaker: "Mr. Speaker, what is all that matter that is being read?"

President Roosevelt has transmitted a number of denunciatory messages and some inflammatory communications to Congress, but it is admitted this evening that during the seven years of his regime he has forwarded no other formal message in which he has quite reached the limits touched in today's reference to the Panama canal affairs. He draws freely upon his vocabulary, and the communication is studded with many of the words used so frequently in Presidential documents, such as "iniquity," "infamy,"

"blackmail," "theft," "financial dishonesty," "villifier," "libels" and "scurrilous."

SCURRILOUS, LIBELOUS, FALSE.

President Roosevelt, in his message in regard to the charges concerning the purchase of the Panama Canal property by the United States, denies that there was anything wrong in the acquisition by the United States of the canal property.

"These stories," he continues, "were first brought to my attention as published in a paper in Indianapolis, called the News, edited by Mr. Delavan Smith. The stories were scurrilous and libelous in character and false in every essential particular. Mr. Smith shelters himself behind the excuse that he merely accepted the statements which had appeared in a paper published in New York, the World, owned by Mr. Joseph Pulitzer. It is idle to say that the known character of Mr. Pulitzer and his newspaper are such that the statements in that paper will be believed by nobody; unfortunately, thousands of persons are ill-informed in this respect and believe the statements they see in print, even though they appear in a newspaper published by Mr. Pulitzer."

"FALSE, WICKED SLANDERS."

Summarizing charges made in this connection, the President says:

"These statements sometimes appeared in the editorials, sometimes in the news columns, sometimes in the shape of contributions from individuals either unknown or known to be of bad character. They are false in every particular from beginning to end. The wickedness of the slanders is only surpassed by their fatuity. So utterly baseless are the stories that apparently they represent in part merely material collected for campaign purposes and in part stories originally concocted with a view of possible blackmail. The inventor of the story about Mr. Charles P. Taft, for instance, evidently supposed that at some period of the Panama purchase Mr. W. H. Taft was Secretary of War, whereas in reality Mr. W. H. Taft never became Secretary of War until long after the whole transaction in question had been closed. The inventor of the story about Mr. Douglas Robinson had not taken the trouble to find out the fact that Mr. Robinson had not had the slightest connection, directly or indirectly, of any kind or sort with any phase of the Panama transaction from beginning to end. The men who attacked Mr. Root in the matter had not taken the trouble to read the public documents which would have informed them that Mr. Root had nothing to do with the purchase, which was entirely arranged through the Department of Justice under the then Attorney-General, Mr. Knox.

BLAMES JOSEPH PULITZER.

"Now, these stories as a matter of fact need no investigation whatever. No shadow of proof has been, or can be, produced in behalf of any of them. They consist simply of a string of infamous libels. In form, they are in part libels upon individuals, upon Mr. Taft and Mr. Robinson for instance. But they are in fact wholly, and in form partly, a libel upon the United States Government. I do not believe we should concern ourselves with the particular individuals who wrote the lying and libelous editorials, articles from correspondents, or articles in the news columns. The real offender is Mr. Joseph Pulitzer, editor and proprietor of the World. While the criminal offense of which Mr. Pulitzer has been guilty is in form a libel upon individuals, the great injury done is in blackmailing the good name of the American people.

WANTS NATION TO PROSECUTE.

"It should not be left to a private citizen to sue Mr. Pulitzer for libel. He should be prosecuted for libel by the Governmental authorities. In point of encouragement of iniquity, in point of infamy, of wrongdoing, there is nothing to choose between a public servant who betrays his trust, a public servant who is guilty of blackmail, or theft, or financial dishonesty of any kind, and a man guilty as Mr. Joseph Pulitzer has been guilty in this instance. It is therefore a high national duty to bring to justice this villifier of the American people, this man who wantonly and wickedly and without one shadow of justification seeks to blacken the character of reputable private citizens and to convict the Government of his own country in the eyes of the civilized world of wrongdoing of the basest and foulest kind, while he has not one shadow of justification of any sort or description for the charge he has made. The Attorney-General has under consideration the form in which the proceedings against Mr. Pulitzer shall be brought."

The President refers to various papers which he transmits with his message and calls attention to numerous utterances and acts relating to the canal and its purchase. He cites the act of Congress by which he was authorized to pay \$40,000,000 for the canal property, and says it was no concern of the President what the new Panama Canal Company did with the money.

KNOX ARRANGED CANAL DEAL.

Explaining the method of concluding the purchase, the President says:

"The Panama canal transaction was actually carried through not by either the then Secretary of State, Mr. John Hay, or the then Secretary of War, Mr. Elihu Root, both of whom, however, were cognizant of all the essential features, but by the then Attorney-General, Mr. P. C. Knox, at present Senator from Pennsylvania. I directed or approved every action, and am responsible for all that was done in carrying out the will of the Congress; and the provisions of the law, enacted by Congress after exhaustive examination and discussion, were scrupulously complied with by the Executive. While the transaction was pending I saw Mr. Cromwell but two or three times, and my communications with him were limited to the exchange of purely formal courtesies. Secretary Hay occasionally saw him, in the same manner; I doubt whether Mr. Root held any conversation with him. The Attorney-General saw him frequently, as he was, counsel for the Panama company; their communications were official, as representing the two sides."

OWNERS NOT CONSIDERED.

The action of the Government, Mr. Roosevelt says, was wholly uninfluenced by any question of who were or were not stockholders either in the new or the old company.

"If, as a matter of fact," he explains, "the canal company, either or both, had been owned by American citizens or by citizens of any other nationality, it would not have altered in the slightest degree the action taken by this Government. Our concern was to get the canal property, which was owned by the French company, and to see that the title was clear. Our transactions were carried on openly and were published in detail, and we dealt solely (so far as the interests of the old Panama company were concerned) with the liquidator appointed by the proper French governmental body, the Civil Tribunal of the Seine, and in accordance with the decree of this same tribunal, with the new Panama Canal Company, which also went into liquidation upon the sale to the United States. All our transactions were carried on openly and were published in detail."

MORGAN & CO. PAID MONEY.

The President states that the money was paid through the New York banking house of J. P. Morgan & Co., acting as fiscal agents of this Government, into the Bank of France, in Paris.

"In these payments," he says, "we followed to the letter the decree of the governmental tribunal of France which had the authority to make such a decree—the Civil Tribunal of the Seine. We had neither desire nor authority to go behind this decree of this proper governmental body, as all the conflicting rights of the security holders of both companies had been settled by the decree of said court by ratification of the arbitration which resulted in that division.

"I wish to make as clear as possible and emphatic as possible the statement that we did not have anything to do with the distribution of a dollar of the \$40,000,000 we paid as regards any stockholder or bondholder of the French companies, save that we followed out the award of the arbitrators appointed in accordance with the decree of the French court which had dealt with this subject in awarding a certain proportion to the old company and a certain proportion to the new company. Any question concerning the stockholders, bondholders or other beneficiaries of the proceeds of sale was purely a question for the Civil Tribunal of the Seine, the French governmental body, with which this nation had nothing whatever to do.

LIST OF 6,000 STOCKHOLDERS.

"Under these circumstances, there was

not the slightest need for Mr. Cromwell to give any information on the subject of the companies for which he had been counsel. This Government has no concern with Mr. Cromwell's relation to these two companies, or either of them, or with the amount of his professional compensation; it was not the affair of this Government to inquire who were the security holders of the companies. Nevertheless, Mr. Cromwell, of his own accord, has submitted to me, together with a copy of his statement published on the 11th instant, and which I transmit herewith, a full list of the stockholders of the new Panama Canal Company of France on January 15, 1900 (numbering more than 6,000) and a list of all stockholders who were present at a special meeting of the company held February 28, 1902, immediately after the cable offer of the company was made to the United States (January 9-11, 1902) to accept the appraisal of \$40,000,000 made by the Isthmian Canal Commission, and to sell for said sum the Panama Canal, concessions and other property and the shares of the Panama Railroad Company.

Referring to accompanying documents, the President says no payment will be made upon the stock of the old Panama Canal Company, and he is informed the payment on the bonded indebtedness will be but 10 per cent. About 6,000 shareholders of the new Panama Canal Company will receive payments, and they will recover their original investments, with annual interest of about 3 per cent.

"NOTHING TO INVESTIGATE."

"The accounts and records of this liquidation, which was concluded in June last," he says, "are on deposit with the Credit Lyonnais, of Paris, as a proper custodian of the same, appointed upon such liquidation. Recently a request was made by a private individual to inspect the records of these payments, but answer was made by the custodians that they saw no proper reason for granting such request by a stranger, and, inasmuch as there is not the slightest ground for suspicion of any bad faith in the transaction, it hardly seems worth while to make the request; but if the Congress desires, I have no doubt that on the request of our Ambassador in Paris the lists of individuals will be shown him.

"As a matter of fact, there is nothing whatever in which this Government is interested to investigate about this transaction. So far as this Government is concerned, every step of the slightest importance has been made public by its Executive, and every step taken in France has there been made public by the proper officials."

NO AMERICAN IN LIST.

Accompanying the President's message was a large bundle of documents bearing upon the transfer of the canal property to the United States. Many of these documents were in French, without English translation. There was nothing which showed directly the persons who received the \$40,000,000 paid by the United States, but there was included a list of about 7,000 stockholders in the old and new Panama Canal companies, all of them citizens of France and of the Colombian Republic. There was not the name of a citizen of the United States in the entire list.