

J. F. Stevens, New Chief Engineer For Panama

Capable and Energetic Expert Who Will Dig the Great Canal—"Wherever He Is, There Is the Army Headquarters"—His Pluck and Perseverance.

A SHORT time ago Secretary Taft was looking for an experienced engineer to advise the Philippine commission in regard to the construction of railways in the Philippine Islands under the plan of government aid adopted by congress. James J. Hill said he knew the right man for the place. He named John F. Stevens. From 1890 to 1903 Mr. Stevens was chief engineer of Mr. Hill's road, the Great Northern, and in the former year he laid out the extension of the road through the Rockies to the Pacific coast. In doing this he started from Assinibolin with two Indian guides and a pack mule. The Indians deserted him, and the mule died, but Stevens persevered in the work and after much hardship completed the task, locating the line as it now runs. Stevens pass, in the Cascade mountains, was named in his honor. Mr. Stevens accepted the offer to be the government expert in railway matters in the Philippines and was to have gone to the islands with Secretary Taft and his party of tourists. But while he was preparing to leave John F. Wallace threw up the post of chief engineer of the Panama canal in order to make more money working for private corporations, and his place was offered to Mr. Stevens. The latter was not long in deciding to accept it and so packed his grip for the isthmus instead of the orient. It was virtually a transfer from one branch of the government's service to another. It was more than that, however, for it was an important promotion. The man who digs the Panama canal will be known as one of the greatest engineers of his time. No task of the magnitude of this has been undertaken and carried out by any engineer of the present generation. Mr. Stevens will



JOHN F. STEVENS.

draw \$30,000 a year, which is \$5,000 more than Mr. Wallace was to have received. He will not be a member of the canal commission, but will devote all his energies to the actual work of canal construction. Speaking of what Mr. Stevens will do, Chairman Shonts of the canal commission has said:

"What we need on the isthmus is a leader of men, a man who knows how to drive, what to expect from his subordinates and how to enlist their enthusiasm and support; a man who will not waste his time figuring out technical details, but who will delegate that work to the board of expert engineers selected for that purpose, while he keeps his attention riveted on the larger end to be accomplished. That is the kind of man I believe John Stevens to be."

Mr. Stevens is old enough to be in the "comparatively useless" class, according to Osler, but has not reached the chloroforming age. He is a native of Maine and was born at West Gardiner in 1853. A brief resume of his engineering record shows that he has had extensive experience in all kinds of construction work.

From 1879 to 1881 he was in the employ of the Denver and Rio Grande railway. He took charge of the location of the main line of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railway across Iowa in 1882 and subsequently was the engineer for the contractors who built 500 miles of the Canadian Pacific railway between Winnipeg and the Rocky mountains. This led to his becoming the principal assistant engineer of the Canadian Pacific, during which time he was engaged in the location and construction of heavy mountain work in British Columbia. In 1890 he went to the Great Northern Railway company. As chief engineer of this road he not only constructed new lines to the west, but practically rebuilt the main lines of the system. He became chief engineer and vice president of the Rock Island in 1903.

Before Mr. Stevens sent his acceptance of his present post to Washington he consulted his "better half." Mrs. Stevens was Miss Harriet O'Brien, a Boston girl, and there are now three sons in the family, the oldest of whom is just taking up his father's profession of engineering. A friend of Emul-

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him: "He's one of those fellows who don't like red tape. Wherever he is, there is the army headquarters, as they used to say of Grant."

The British Guinea.
It is among the things generally known that the guinea obtained its name from the gold from which it was made having been brought from the Guinea coast by the African company of traders. The first notice of this gold was in 1649, during the commonwealth of England, when on the 14th of April of that year the parliament referred to the council of state a paper presented to the house concerning the coinage of gold brought in a ship lately come from "Guiny" for the better advancing of trade. But it was in the reign of Charles II. that the name was first given to this coin. It is among things not generally known that when the guinea was originally coined the intention was to make it current as a

twenty but from an error, or rather a series of errors, in calculating the exact proportions of the value of gold and silver it never circulated for that value. Sir Isaac Newton in his time fixed the true value of the guinea in relation to silver at 20s. 8d., and by his advice the crown proclaimed that for the future it should be current at 21 shillings.

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