

NATION'S
TREASURE

HOUSE AT
WASHINGTON

Mammoth
Steel Vault
That Holds

the Surplus
Wealth of
Uncle Sam

WHEN congress passed the emergency currency act last May authorizing the controller of currency to have printed emergency currency to the value of one-half of the amount of government bonds owned by the national banks throughout the country, a condition was created—and a very serious condition—which nobody realized so fully as Watson W. Eldridge, chief of the division of issues under the currency bureau. For this vast sum, about \$430,000,000, was to be placed in his hands for safe keeping, as is all the national bank currency.

At the time of the passage of this act there was on hand in the vaults on the second floor of the Treasury building in Washington about \$200,000,000 of national banknotes, as a "working stock." This quantity of paper money was about all that these two vaults would hold. So when the bureau of printing and engraving, after sending out a C. Q. D. summons for all the expert engravers in the country to come to Washington and aid in altering the steel plates, to comply with the new law, began to send the emergency currency in dry-lots to Mr. Eldridge, that trusted guardian of the nation's wealth began to spend the most uneasy nights in all his 40 years' service in the treasury department and 20 years in his present position.

The money continued to pour in, not in thousands and hundreds of thousands, but in millions. It was the most unwelcome money ever unloaded upon a man working for a salary.

New Vault Made Necessary.
When things reached a crisis an order was given for a vault to hold this emergency currency, a vault which would make all previously manufactured safes look like pocket savings banks, for the new structure of steel was to be thin shells between inconceivable wealth and thieves who were ready to break in and steal, and the corruption of fire, earthquakes, and devastation of any other character. It must be a vault, so the treasury officials specified, capable of holding the vastest sum of money ever stored in one place, five hundred millions.

The order was given and the safe-makers set to work. To-day the vault stands completed, as witnessed by the accompanying illustration, the first which the government has allowed to be taken of this vault. There are stored in the steel pigeonholes a little more than 300,000,000 of banknotes and the remaining millions are being stored away as fast as they can be counted in the big offices above the level of the street.

The new vault, which was built at a cost of \$45,000, is a two-story struc-

ture, furnished with steel racks, which closely resemble safety deposit box racks. The interior walls are of Harveyized steel, half an inch thick, and the whole vault is incased in masonry and cement more than two feet thick. But beneath the masonry and the shell of steel lies the chief protection of the vault against burglars—a mat of closely woven steel wires. Now, each of these wires is charged with electricity, so that when one of them is touched with an awl or a bit or a dynamite pump an alarm is in-

stantly set off in an adjoining building, where watchmen are constantly on guard. And to make sure that this electrical apparatus is working properly there is a "buzzer" which goes off every 15 minutes inside the vault. If the warning apparatus is not working properly this buzzer will be thrown out of commission and the watchmen will be immediately notified.

Cannot Tamper with Cables.
"But what if the cables connecting the vault with the watchmen's room should be cut?" Mr. Eldridge was asked. The reply was that any tampering with the cable would have the same effect upon the alarm system as if the vault itself had been attacked.

This enormous vault, whose roof is on a level with the pavement, has a perfect system of ventilation by great driving and suction fans, which are turned on when the vault is opened, so that the air is fresh and cool at all times. It is lighted by electricity, the lighting plug being put in place only after the vault door is opened. One of the marvels of the vault is the vault door, a complicated mass of gray steel weighing seven tons, but so wonderfully balanced on ball-bearing hinges that it can be opened without effort. It has four combinations, and no one man in the employ of the government knows them. Two men know two of them, and two others the remaining two, so that in order to unlock the money chamber at least two persons must be present. The door is, of course, equipped with the time lock device, which is now in use on all first-class safes. But even entrance through the vault door sets off the alarm in the watchmen's room. It is necessary, therefore, to supply the watchmen's department with a schedule showing at what hour the vault will be opened and at what hour it will be closed. The vault, according to the schedule, must not be opened before 8:45 in the morning, and it must be closed before five every night.

Old-Fashioned Elevator.
The only way to reach the vault is by way of a tiny hydraulic elevator, which is protected by an iron door, opening almost at the elbow of the chief of the division of issues, who keeps the key in his desk. This elevator car was barely large enough to carry Mr. Eldridge, the newspaper man, and a photographer down to the vault. It is operated by the old-fashioned rope-pulling device and is the most prosaic road to millions imaginable.

On June 18, the morning on which the photograph from which we got the illustration was taken, the vault contained \$309,199,910, in the following denominations: \$77,516,660 in fives, \$210,011,300 in tens and twenties, \$6,256,200 in tens, and \$15,415,750 in fifties and one hundreds. The

Twenty years ago this vast amount of printed bills would have been utterly worthless until each bill had been signed by the president and the cashier of the bank in whose name it was issued, but in the nineties congress passed a law making the notes legal as soon as placed in circulation, thus adding materially to Mr. Eldridge's cares, whose duty it then became to handle money, not in the making, but the perfected cash. Now, as soon as the bills are entered upon the ledgers of the treasury as being shipped to a bank, they are considered money. The express companies handling these shipments are bonded for \$500,000, and in case of loss or robbery the company is held responsible for the loss. It was only a short time ago that a shipment of \$40,000 to the Pacific coast was stolen in transit, and the express company was forced to give a check for the full amount. The treasury is to-day redeeming some of these stolen banknotes without question, although some of them bear no signature at all, while others bear the forged signatures of the president of that bank and of the cashier. The express company was never able to recover more than \$15,000 of the stolen bills. It had to lose the rest.

Deserves Thanks of Nation.

The crispness and durability of our present day banknotes are due largely to the efforts of Mr. Eldridge, the guardian of the Jumbo among vaults. Many years ago congress passed a law authorizing the issue of treasury notes, and the bill required that these notes be put in circulation within 30 days. It was a rush job. The paper

currency act. The steel plates for every national bank in the country had to be altered. To the legend of the face of the banknotes and at the top, "Secured by bonds of the United States," there had to be added a third line, "Or other securities." I order to add these three words over plate had to be softened, the extr words engraved, and then the whole plate retempered. Each of these banknote plates, which costs \$75, will print 30,000 bills, then the impressions begin to get dull, and the plate has to be softened, the dies recut, and the plate tempered again, after which about 10,000 more impressions can be taken. The plates are then destroyed and new ones made.

To-day Mr. Eldridge sleeps easy. "Let your notes come in as fast as you can make them," is his message to the head of the bureau of engraving and printing. "Rush the notes over until we have a stock of 700,000,000, 200,000,000 to remain in the upper vaults for current needs of the banks and 500,000,000 to rest secure in the vault beneath the treasury, guarded by its walls of steel and stone and by its network of wires which never sleep."

DANDELION AS A BAROMETER

Absolutely Reliable When One Can Read Its Signs—Also is Weather Prophet.

The dandelion is a dandy barometer, one of the commonest and most reliable. It is when the blooms have seeded and are in the fluffy, feathery condition that the weather prophet fa-



Watson W. Eldridge, Custodian of Seven Hundred Millions of Dollars.

on which money is printed has to be dampened before it takes the impression of the hand press, so that when it comes out it is not sized (covered with glossy surface as the result of a bath in a glutinous substance). These treasury notes were issued just as they came from the press. As a result the fibers soon began to break through the surface of the paper, and as each bit of fiber dropped from the bill the ink began to fade, so that within two weeks after the first bill was issued the treasury had to begin to redeem the tattered notes and issue new ones. It was then that a committee appointed to examine into methods of the treasury department suggested that all paper on which banknotes were printed should be resized after printing. Mr. Eldridge was the aggressive factor in this particular reform, and it is to him that the present pleasing appearance of our paper money is due.

Prior to the completion of the new vault the emergency currency was stored in the basement of the Union Trust Company, at the corner of Fifteenth and H streets, N. W. The first few millions that were received were placed in a large iron vault, but when carloads of money began to arrive this vault with a capacity of a mere forty millions soon overflowed, and then this enormous wealth was stacked on the floor in ordinary wooden boxes, which any hatchet could have knocked to smithereens. This seemed an awful risk for the government to take, but there was nothing else to be done. A tiny dynamite cartridge discharged in a little areaway in the rear of the bank building would have blown a hole in the cellar walls that would have bared to view wealth of which Solomon "in all his glory" could not have dreamed, and which would have made haughty Croesus green with envy. In order to meet this danger the government employed ten extra watchmen, who patrolled the streets and alleys in the neighborhood of the Union Trust building for nine months, day and night. These watchmen were only dropped from the pay roll of the treasury on May 10, when the new vault was turned over to the government by the contractors.

Forced Change in Steel Plates.
But the division of issue was not the only branch of the government which found itself extremely busy after the passage of the emergency

cillities come to the fore. In fine weather the ball expands to the full, but when rain approaches it shuts like an umbrella. If the weather is inclined to be showery, it keeps shut all the time, only opening when the danger from the wet is past.

The ordinary clover and all its varieties, including the trefol and the shamrock, are also barometers. When rain is coming the leaves shut together like the shells of an oyster and do not open again until fine weather is assured. For a day or two before rain comes their stems swell to an appreciable extent and stiffen so that the leaves are borne more upright than usual. This stem swelling when rain is expected is a feature of many flowering grasses.

The fingers of which the leaves of the horse chestnut are made up keep flat and fanlike so long as fine weather is likely to continue. With the coming of rain, however, they droop as if to offer less resistance to the weather. The scarlet pimpernel is nicknamed the "poor man's weather glass" or wind cope, and opens its flowers only in fine weather. As soon as rain is in the air it shuts up and remains closed until the shower or storm is over.

The common garden convolvulus crumples up its delicate blossoms within the space of half an hour if rain drops are on the way, and it keeps them thus until the bad weather has passed.

Bread from Fish Roe.

Peasants in the eastern regions of Russia make bread from fish roe. At the present time, owing to the hard season, there is what they term in that country a "little famine"; consequently the peasants are making bread from the roe of fresh water fish, with which the rivers abound. The process of making "fish flour" differs little from the ordinary one. The roe is dried and ground, and cooked in the usual fashion.

Telephones and Street Railroads.

The cost of the central station plants existing in 1907 in the United States was just \$1,000,000,000; the capitalization of telephony was \$1,100,000,000 and the capitalization of railroads was close upon the \$4,000,000,000, making a grand aggregate of \$6,100,000,000, or for 1908 about \$7,000,000,000.

The Methods of Josephine

By Ella Middleton Tybout

(Copyright, by J. B. Lippincott Co.)

I think I can truthfully say that the first time Josephine awakened any real interest in my heart was when I discovered she was in love.

One afternoon she returned with the usual bunch of violets and a most unusual expression. The instant I saw her I knew a crisis was at hand, and rose to the occasion as a cork rises to the surface of the water—lightly, buoyantly, yet determinedly.

Josephine went at once to her room and closed the door with decision. I hovered on the stairway, palpitating with uncertainty, and the affectionate solicitude which is so far removed from mere vulgar curiosity. Finally, mustering all my resolution, I turned the knob of the door and entered with quite a jaunty air, carelessly humming a tune.

Josephine lay face downward on the bed, the violets crushed and broken, and the heels of her patent leather shoes sticking pathetically outward. A choking, gasping sound revealed that she was crying into the counterpane. Gently murmuring an endearing epithet, I laid my hand upon her head.

"Oh, Aunt Gertrude!" sobbed Josephine. "Aunt Gertrude!"
"Poor child," I returned, responsive-ly. "I understand—I understand."
"O, no, you don't," she interrupted, ungratefully. "You—you can't."
"Josephine," I said, kindly but firmly, "you are engaged to be married—and to a man."

It was evident she was astonished at my perspicacity, for she raised her head as though listening and nodded assent.

"Furthermore," I continued, follow-

ing up my advantage and speaking with conviction, "you are unhappy."

Down went her head again, and the sniffing into the counterpane recommenced.

"Dear," I whispered with unalloyed sweetness, "is he worthy of these tears?"
No reply.

"Do you love him," I continued, "deeply, truly, everlastingly?"
Josephine sat upright and pushed the hair out of her eyes.

"Oh, Aunt Gertrude," she gasped, "it isn't him—it's them."
"Them?" I hazarded, faintly.

"Yes," said my niece with the calmness of despair, "that's the trouble. I'm engaged all right—but there's two of him."

"Tell me about it," I suggested, chiefly because I felt something was expected of me.

"Yes," she agreed quickly, "I might just as well. I've got to tell somebody."
"I ignored the last clause and composed myself to listen. Her story was briefly thus:

Being unable to withstand the fascination to two callow youths, and finding it impossible to preserve the peace between them, Josephine had formulated the scheme of taking them on alternate days, like two varieties of pills, as it were. She remarked casually that she had stopped their visits to the house, as she disliked to see them glare at each other, and, moreover, her evenings were thus left free for others. She did not explain this, however, but insinuated parental opposition and daily persecution of herself, borne with angelic sweetness.

Gently, but decidedly, I laid the facts of the case before my niece. I told her that, as she could marry but one man, it was manifestly improper to be engaged to two.

"You must now," I continued—ignoring her remark, because I could not help comprehending that such a situation might be agreeable, albeit sinful—"you must now, dear child, make your selection. Which of your suitors do you love the better?"

"Yes," said Josephine miserably, "it's up to me to choose, and I've done it."
"Let your heart guide you," I advised gently.

"That's just what I tried to do," returned Josephine, confusedly, "but the old thing wouldn't work. So I tossed up a penny—heads for Ned and tails for Harry. It came down tails."

"And," she continued, quietly, "I'm going to elope with him tonight."
"To-night!" I ejaculated, aghast.

"Yes, to-night. And, oh, Aunt Gertrude, I don't want to be bit. It's not Harry, after all—it's Ned. Just as soon as the penny came down tails up I knew it was Ned I wanted, but I

was afraid to toss again, because then if I got Ned I might want Harry—don't you see?"
I did not see. In fact, such vacillation was quite incomprehensible to my well-balanced mind, but I was obliged to devote my energies to soothing Josephine, who again turned her face to the counterpane and wept copiously.

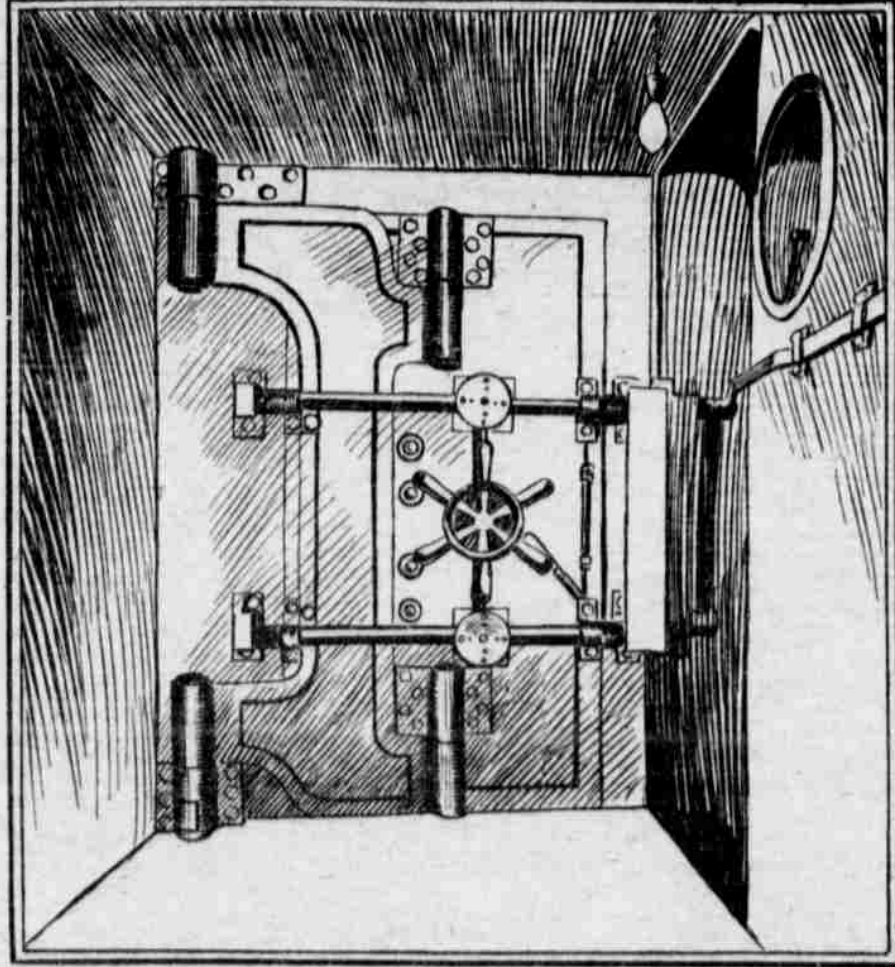
"And he's waiting on the corner by Trinity church," she sobbed; "he said he'd wait till I came. And it's raining. And he has a cold. And I simply can't go marry him. And he's bought the ring. And I think Harry's such a hideous name. And he'll wait till I come, and—and—"

Josephine suddenly sat upright and grasped my hand.
"You go," she said, "your go, and explain things."
It is needless to recount the argument that followed. Enough to say that I finally agreed to go and tell the man waiting to marry my niece that, after all, she preferred some one else.

Josephine produced a long, light cloak and wrapped me in it; she also adorned me with a large hat loaded with plumes, because, she explained, Harry would be looking for just that costume. Over the hat and face she tied a thick veil, remarking that no one could possibly tell who was inside it, and perhaps Harry would marry me in spite of myself, as he was very impatient. Then she giggled hysterically.



"You Go and Explain Things."



The Door to the Vault—its Weight is Seven Tons.

ture, furnished with steel racks, which closely resemble safety deposit box racks. The interior walls are of Harveyized steel, half an inch thick, and the whole vault is incased in masonry and cement more than two feet thick. But beneath the masonry and the shell of steel lies the chief protection of the vault against burglars—a mat of closely woven steel wires. Now, each of these wires is charged with electricity, so that when one of them is touched with an awl or a bit or a dynamite pump an alarm is in-

money is printed in sheets, four bills to the sheet and 1,000 sheets to the package. There were nearly 9,000,000 sheets, or 8,797 packages to store away. The actual value represented in this amount of printed paper is only \$439,850. In estimating this value of the printed paper the government figures that each package weighs 14 pounds, and the paper is purchased at 43 cents per pound. The balance is for the printing and the handling of the bills, which are counted 53 times before being stored away.