

CURRENT TOPICS

THIS STORY is telegraphed from Hot Springs, Va., to the Philadelphia North American: "President-elect William H. Taft is on the water wagon. While he was always temperate in his use of liquors, he was never known as a total abstainer until last night. There was a small dinner on Friday night and it was noticed that Mr. Taft solemnly turned his glass down. There was some comment. 'Yes, it is going to stay turned down,' he said. 'I am not going to drink anything again, ever.' 'You never did drink enough so that any one could notice it,' said a boyhood friend. An organization invited Mr. Taft to a banquet 'any time before you are inaugurated.' 'What is the matter with these people?' the president-elect exclaimed. 'Do they think I am going to be any different after I am inaugurated?'"

WHEN JOHN D. Rockefeller greeted his friends after Thanksgiving service he took occasion to remark that he was always thankful for the many blessings bestowed upon him. And this prompted the New York World to say: "'Always thankful'—that is the phrase expressing the habitual attitude of the richest man on earth. It runs like a stream of oil through his testimony, his writings, his discourse. Touching the 'hazardous risks' of Standard Oil, when Mr. Kellogg asked Mr. Rockefeller if the production of oil instead of decreasing had not greatly increased, the oil king meekly replied, 'Yes, we are very, very grateful for that.' Every day during his hearing he told the commissioner, the reporters, the chance listeners, that he was 'very, very grateful' for something—for oil, for health, for saving habits, for liver and kidneys, for shrewd partners, for pipe lines. To him every day is Thanksgiving day. Always grateful and always humble—unctuously grateful, unctuously meek. The oil of meekness and gratitude drips from Mr. Rockefeller's lips, exudes from his skin, shines in his face, lubricates his smile; the odor of it permeates the atmosphere of his environment. He is the personification—the living, moving embodiment—of the beatitude, 'Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.'"

JOHN BIGELOW, journalist, statesman and diplomat, celebrated his ninety-first birthday at his home in New York City. The New York correspondent for the Denver Post, describing his visit to Mr. Bigelow, says: "Before him was a pile of letters, every one of which would be answered with his own hand. On either side lay notes of the various brochures upon which he employed his spare time. His form was hardly bowed, nor were the strong shoulders greatly stooped by the weight of nearly 100 years, every one of which had been filled with willing service. 'But I have nothing to say today,' said he. 'The attainment of almost a century of life is not a matter for which I am responsible. Mere longevity is not a thing to be boasted of. Why should I preach to the world from a pinnacle of ninety-one years of life, when I have reached that age through no act of my own? Great age is no achievement. I have simply lived. To give an interview upon the anniversary of my birth would seem to indicate a pride in having attained that age—which I do not feel.'"

PLAINLY, William H. Taft is a happy man. In a recent newspaper interview he said: "When I consider all that has come to me I wonder, with trembling, if there is not to be some great misfortune to offset it all. We have our health and our children. My parents are dead, but they lived to an honored and peaceful old age. I have not had any grievous sorrow. Politically, there were the Philippines; it was the turn of a hand whether I should go there. If I hadn't I don't suppose I should be the president-elect at this time. Of course it is sometimes said that opportunity comes to every man and that it is to his credit that he seize it, yet looking back I can not see that I exercised any shrewd discrimination. I can not persuade myself it was my own wisdom that led me into

the work. Twice came the offer of a place on the supreme bench. My inclination was to accept, and it was not due to my judgment after all that I did not. I have much for which to be thankful, and I can not help wondering if there is not to be some compensatory sorrow." No one will begrudge Mr. Taft his great happiness and men of all political parties will wish that nothing will occur to mar his present joyful frame of mind.

IF THE BILL for the revision of the postal laws, which is being prepared by the joint postal investigation commission, appointed by congress two years ago, becomes a law, the four offices of assistant postmaster general will be abolished, a director of posts with seven assistants provided for, and the entire postal service of the United States divided into fifteen separate districts. A Washington dispatch, carried by the Associated Press, says: "It is claimed that a director of posts, appointed to hold the office until removed for cause, and who shall receive a high salary, will tend to improve the service through a continuity of policies for the benefit of the postal service. By providing for seven assistants, the disadvantages due to frequent changes, and the appointment of inexperienced men to four offices of assistant postmaster generals will, it is believed, be obviated. The assistant directors are also to hold office during good behavior. To perfect the system of management, the provision for fifteen superintendents, to have direct charge of the fifteen separate postal districts, has been decided on. Another provision of the bill is the assignment of certain duties now performed by the third assistant postmaster general to a commission of appeals. This commission would issue all fraud orders and pass on the admission to the mails of second class matter. The codification of postal laws is also a part of the work required of the commission."

SPEAKING BEFORE the Economic club at New York City recently E. H. Harriman, the railroad magnate, said: "I'm a sort of an economic subject myself, an economic morsel, a bone of contention; I've been pursued by the pack and the scent is getting pretty slim. I don't intend to do anything to renew it. I wish that I were able to say, free to say what I would like to you; but I am not yet freed from a situation that prevents my speaking my mind to you fully. Some things that have been said here tonight are not right and some day you'll know they are not right. Surely you'll know it. I've tried to do things satisfactorily in a lasting way and to give right transportation. I have had many confabs with representatives of the government and I've heard some of them agree that what they had proposed was not right. I told the president of the United States three years ago that in passing the present interstate commerce act without changing the Sherman act he was inviting a great deal of trouble. Now he will probably recommend—at least I think he will recommend the very thing which I suggested. There are two things that menace the prosperity of the country—idle money and idle labor. The one is as mischievous as the other. It should be the object of government to create a condition where both may be used properly and fairly."

AS TO CAMPAIGN funds the Indianapolis News makes a few remarks. It says: "According to the report of Treasurer Sheldon it cost \$1,655,518 to prosecute the campaign of Mr. Taft. Out of this there was turned over to the various state committees \$620,000, concerning which no detailed report is made. We have no information in regard to the amount received by the congressional committee. How much of the \$620,000 turned over to the state committees was saved we are not informed. Further than this we have no report of any contributions less than \$500. Doubtless these gifts are small as compared with those of other years—1896, for example. But they are nevertheless disgracefully large. The democrats got

through with \$620,000, and they had all the money they really needed for all honest purposes. To be sure we have no report from their congressional committee, but there is no reason to think that it had much money. If a campaign can be honestly financed for \$620,000 anything spent over and above that must either have been wasted, or spent for corrupt purposes. In the republican list will be found the names of many protected manufacturers, such as the Joneses, Olivers and Laughlins of Pittsburgh, and the Disstons of Philadelphia. Of course, our old friend Cromwell responded liberally, his gift being \$15,000. The committee had \$20,000 from Andrew Carnegie, and another from J. Pierpont Morgan. Robert Bacon, an assistant secretary of state, and an associate of Morgan, gave \$5,000. Brother Charles heads the list with a contribution of \$110,000. We do not discover the names of any of the Standard Oil people or of Edward H. Harriman in the list. However, no one can know who helped to make up the funds given by the Union League club of New York, or the Union League club of Philadelphia."

THIS REPORT of Treasurer Sheldon raises, in the opinion of the News, the old issue and in very direct form. The News says that the American people can not afford to shirk this issue, and it adds: "With the increasing tendency to look on politics as a mere department of business, and with the growing disposition to subordinate everything to the so-called 'prosperity' issue, we are likely to see larger rather than smaller campaign funds. Yet they are so large now as to be a positive menace to the purity of our elections and so to the perpetuity of our institutions. We must in some way arrange to have the fullest publicity both of receipts and disbursements and to have it prior to the election. This was the demand of the democrats during the campaign. It is a righteous demand. If our presidents are to continue to be elected by the people rather than by the interests, if in a word we are to preserve free and popular government, we must put an end to this campaign fund scandal. In some way we must make it impossible, or at least very difficult for contributions to be made by men who have any direct and personal interest in legislation, for after all that is the greatest scandal in the business. It is a scandal because it amounts to a direct purchase of law. Protected manufacturers make large gifts to the campaign fund and they then plead their generosity as a reason for protective duties to be levied in their interest. No one is foolish enough to impeach the validity of Mr. Taft's title. The result shows that nothing could have defeated him. He was fairly the people's choice. The election could not have been bought away from him any more than it was bought for him. But there is still the danger that our elections may degenerate into a mere financial struggle in which the longest purse will win. If the republican fund had been no larger than the democratic fund Mr. Taft would still have been elected. The necessary conclusion is that the fund raised in his behalf was much larger than was needed. Its only effect will be to create a feeling of gratitude on the part of republican leaders toward the men who gave so lavishly to the party's war chest. There will thus be the usual feeling of obligation—an obligation that ought not to exist. The best thing that could happen to the country would be to have both party committees 'hard up' all the while. This would enforce an economy which would make for honesty, make even for true party efficiency. For the only men who really strengthen a party are those who vote for it because they believe in its principles, and never those who vote for it because they expect or hope to get something out of it."

A ST LOUIS reader of The Commoner sends the following clipping from an editorial in the New York World: "While the national republican committee has published a list of contributors to the campaign fund, according