

CURRENT TOPICS

THE former president of Venezuela is giving the immigration officials plenty of trouble. The New York World says Gen. Cipriano Castro is rapidly becoming as much of a vexatious problem to this country as he was to Venezuela. As soon as he learned, on being detained here after his arrival, that he would be subjected to an official investigation and doubtless would not be permitted to land, he, in the language of an immigration attache, "beat the government to it." He announced he would depart voluntarily. He added that he would depart by the Hamburg-American liner Amerika, sailing for Hamburg. As an earnest of his intention, he phoned to the line's office and engaged stateroom No. 152. As he was brought here by a French liner and as he means to go on a German liner to Hamburg, the immigration folk are in a muddle. Suppose the Hamburg authorities won't have him and send him back by the Amerika? The fact that he had been shipped away on a German vessel to a German port will have relieved the French line of all responsibility for having brought him here. "If the Amerika brings him back, where is it all to end?" the officials are asking. Meantime the former dictator occupies his rooms on Ellis Island and lets the other persons fret. A group of newspaper men went over to see him. Much red tape was unwound, then a room was set aside for the interview. Into it came Castro, wearing a dark suit of clothes, a skull cap of black velvet, trimmed with gold, and cloth slippers, embossed with gold. The officials had a stenographer present, with orders to take down all the reporters' questions and Castro's replies. The gist of the replies was that Castro had no intention of going back to Venezuela; that, contrary to report, no German interest was fostering a revolution there; that he had no intention of visiting Havana, and that all of his fortune had been taken from him by Gen. Gomez. He added that his wife—he didn't say which—is in Tenerife. He concluded with a prayer for "the prosperity of America." His hearers could not tell how much sarcasm lay behind the prayer. An immigration official would not permit the putting of any questions that related to the action of the government.

THOMAS A. EDISON is indeed a wizard. In an interview with the New York representative of the Denver News, Mr. Edison said he believes the end of the present legitimate stage is at hand as a result of his newest invention, a talking motion picture machine, called the Kinetophone, which proved successful in a demonstration a few days ago. The News interview follows: The inventor explained why he thinks the present \$2 show must give way to the cheaper form of amusement, which, he declared, will give almost as much as the other for one-twentieth of the price. There will be no more barnstormers, either, because no one will be willing to pay for second-class acting when the foremost stars are performing for the "talkies" and can be seen and heard for a dime. "Is the machine perfected?" Edison was asked. "Nothing is perfect," replied Edison, "but it works. It will be put in operation in Brooklyn inside of thirty days." "What does your new invention do?" "It delivers at the exact instant of occurrence on the film any sound made at the moment such action took place. Every word uttered by the actors is recorded and delivered in time with the action; the creaking of a gate, a whistle, the noise of hoof-beats, even the click of cocking a revolver, comes apparently from the scene and in unison with the motion." "How is it done?" "The phonograph, which is placed behind the scene, is wired to the picture machine, which may be a hundred yards away. The speed of the talking parts acts as a brake on the film, so that neither can get ahead of the other. There are special records which run as long as the film lasts. Other records can be made to come into place successfully and the performance may be carried out through a whole play. Whole operas will be rendered and the films can even be colored by hand if the display of color is needed. Small towns whose yearly taxes would not pay for three performances of the Metropolitan Opera company, can see and hear the greatest stars in the world for 10

cents and will pay because of the volume of business. We want democracy in our amusements. It is safe to say that only one out of every fifty persons in the United States has any right to spend the price asked for a theater ticket." "How long did it take to work out the plan for talking motion pictures?" was asked. "Thirty-seven years," replied Edison, slowly. "It is all of that time since I made a motion picture show inside a box by dropping the succession of drawings rapidly and attaching a record to two other tubes." "And was that successful?" "Not the kind of success I wanted. What I want must affect the whole people. Actors will have to leave the legitimate stage to work for the movies in order to get any money. This is all the better for them. They can live in one place all the year round and barnstorming will cease automatically when no one wants to pay several times the amount of the movies' show for some inferior production of a stale play." "Will there be a great fortune in it?" "Money?" asked Edison. "Why, all the money I make on an invention goes into furthering my experiments. I do not seek money. Besides, there will be any number of others begin along the line, and I have found that an inventor is always sacrificed for the public good, which is satisfactory so long as the great masses are benefited. Often the courts do not uphold me, but somehow, I get the credit whatever that is good for," he added with a laugh. "Will it not be hard on actors?" was suggested. "On the contrary," replied Edison, earnestly, "they are going to be benefited. They will be able to lead a normal home life. I can see nothing in the future but big studios centralized, perhaps in New York, employing all the actors all the year round and at a better figure than they now get."

THE origin of some of the present-day political slang is explained by a writer in the Knoxville (Tenn.) Sentinel, in this way: Do you know what "up Salt river" meant, and why it came to be used for describing the destination of defeated candidates? In Kentucky, Salt river is a crooked little stream whose upper waters used to be the haunts of all sorts of thieves. When anything in the neighborhood was stolen or lost, people used to say: "I reckon it's been rowed up Salt river." You've heard the phrase "laying pipes." That is said to have originated in 1848 when the Croton water pipes were laid in New York and when a lot of scandal accompanied their laying. A political orator once boasted that he had held his audiences "spellbound." He was sneered at by an opponent as a "spellbinder," and the new phrase stuck. By the way, of course you know that "stump speaking" dates back from the days when politicians in this country stood on the stumps of felled trees in fields to harangue their farmer audiences. And so on, to infinity.

A TIMELY hint to American parents is given by the Mer Rouge (La.) Democrat, when it says: Every member of a community and especially every parent should take a deep interest in the public school. It is not enough to pay your school tax without complaining, or to know that the teachers are qualified, nor is it even enough to keep your children in school regularly. If you are really interested in the subject as you should be, you should visit the school regularly and persistently. Few people have any idea what an incentive it is to both teacher and scholar to know that outsiders are taking a lively interest in their work. We believe the little folks at school appreciate such interest more, perhaps, than the larger ones. Still the effect is not lost on any of them, and we hope every parent will take a hint from this and place the public school on their visiting list.

NOW they say that the suspender is a thing of the past. A Chicago dispatch, carried by the Associated Press, says: Only a few men wear suspenders nowadays, according to officials of the Graft Suspender company, a Chicago firm, whose creditors filed a petition in bankruptcy

in the United States district court. Twenty years ago, according to M. A. Graft, its president, the suspender business was flourishing. One of the first steps from boyhood to young manhood was to acquire a pair of fancy 'gal-luses.' A Christmas box was incomplete without them. When in doubt about a remembrance to a man, suspenders always were safe articles upon which to take a chance. Now all is changed, said Graft. Two years ago the demand began to decrease. Belts replaced suspenders. Hence the failure, he said.

ON the unimpeachable authority of the geological survey, says a writer in the Cleveland Leader, it is stated that the only three states which can boast of mountains reaching an altitude of more than 14,000 feet above the sea are California, Colorado and Washington. California has one peak, Mt. Whitney, which is 14,501 feet high. Colorado has two, Mt. Massive and Mt. Elbert, each rising 14,402 feet, and Washington has one, Mt. Ranier, which is 14,363 feet above the level of the sea. It does not follow, by any means, that these are the mountains of the United States, not including Alaska, which have the appearance of the greatest altitude. A peak may rise thousands of feet higher above the sea than another mountain and yet show much less of its height to the observer, from whatever point he may make his comparisons. It depends on what the altitude of the base of the mountains is and how they rise from the surrounding country. For example, the foot of Pike's Peak is as far above the sea as the summit of Mt. Washington. About half of the sea-level altitude of many mountains in Colorado and other Rocky Mountain states is lost, for scenic purposes, because it consists only in the elevation of the whole region where they stand. A volcano like Tenerife or Fernando Po, or the more noted Mt. Etna, may be lower than the highest mountain in Colorado, according to the books, but it leaps straight up from the level of the sea and hence is really much higher in comparison with the surrounding country. For the same reason there is much less difference between the peaks of the Rocky Mountains and those of the east, as in the White mountains and the Adirondacks, than the official figures stating their height would imply. Five thousand feet, all in sight, is equal to 10,000 feet half hidden by the general altitude of the region.

JOHN WANAMAKER, the Philadelphia merchant, who was at one time postmaster general, has declared in favor of government ownership of the telegraph lines. Mr. Wanamaker says: "I want to see the two great servants of the people, the postoffice and the telegraph, reunited, and the telephone brought in to enhance the value of the combination. Public interest, private needs and the popular will call for these agencies to protect the great postal system of the country. The longer their employment is delayed, the greater the aggravation and injustice to the people and the costlier it will be. The electric current belongs to the people by right, and is bound to become their servant—not of a class, nor of one-sixty-fourth of the population, as at present."

THE spectacle of rival naval commanders exchanging witty and sarcastic remarks by wireless during the progress of a battle such as was observed the other day during a skirmish between Turkish and Greek warships, says a writer in the Washington (D. C.) Post, is a peculiarly up-to-date contribution to the world's collection of tales of the sea. It is a theme that Kipling could handle; but it should not be imagined that there is lacking nowadays material for a Stevenson. Two weird yarns which have recently appeared in the news dispatches sound like plots invented by "R. L. S." himself, and breathe of that romance of the deep so dear to the hearts of children and adventurers. The story of Willie Gee, the little Jamaican negro boy who was picked up by a ship in the Caribbean from the branches of a palm tree with which he had blown out to sea by a hurricane, seemed to reach the very apex of adventure, but