

CURRENT TOPICS

R. J. AHRENDT of Toledo, Ohio, is the possessor of a document which is probably an authentic field order issued by "the Father of His Country." The paper, which is wonderfully preserved, although discolored with age, bears in faded ink the following order: "Headquarters, Valley Forge, March 2nd, 1778.—Sir: Until further, place a picket three miles beyond the bridge on the Norristown road, with orders to arrest all persons unknown, coming within, and all suspicious persons going without the line. G. WASHINGTON. To Genl. Huntington.

FROM what he knows of the history of this paper the Kansas City Journal says its owner is quite certain that it is the genuine handwriting of General Washington. "It was owned years ago by a civil war veteran living near Monroe, Mich. This man declared he was a grandson of a revolutionary soldier, who had been stationed at Valley Forge and later served near the person of General Washington. The paper was regarded by his family as just what it purported to be, the family traditions as to the revolutionary soldier being full and complete. The owner of the paper pledged it with a Monroe business man on several occasions for small sums, and finally was unable to redeem it. While the document is clean and unfrayed, it is evidently very old. Its edges are almost as dark as the writing on its face. There is no water mark on the paper or any other evidence that might help to establish its age. Mr. Ahrendt will endeavor to locate the family which was in possession of the document many years and establish for himself the record of the soldier who, it is asserted, took part in the revolutionary war."

THE most expensive railroad in the world, is the New York subway. A writer in Leslie's Weekly, commenting upon the cost of this road, says: "When it is entirely in operation this road will be about 20 miles in length. Its cost will be \$40,000,000. That is \$2,000,000 per mile. About eight miles are now in operation. The fare is five cents. When the remaining sections shall be opened the fare will be the same. The city of New York has paid the cost of construction, and the \$40,000,000, with interest, year by year, must be repaid by the operating company. Nickel fares must do this. If the cost were represented by five-cent coins placed edge to edge, there would be a line more than 150 miles long. We already know that the cost of construction will be \$40,000,000. Equipment will add \$28,000,000 to this. The steel beams and girders in place weigh 124,000,000 pounds. There was excavated 3,250,000 cubic yards of material. As many as 10,000 men have been employed on the work at one time, and the road will give permanent employment to 1,000 persons. During the construction there were fatal accidents which cost 50 lives."

ANSWERING the question, "Which kind of wood lasts longest?" a writer in the Kansas City Journal, contributes this interesting bit of information: "Some interesting experiments have been made to ascertain which wood lasts the longest. It was found that birch and aspen decayed in three years, willow and chestnut in four years, maple and red beech in five years, and elm and ash in seven years. Oak, Scottish fir and Weymouth pine decayed to the depth of half an inch in seven years; larch and juniper were uninjured at the end of seven years. In situations so free from moisture that they may be practically called dry the durability of timber is unlimited. The roof of Westminster hall is more than 450 years old."

AT ONE TIME the British government enacted and enforced laws regulating the meals of its subjects. A writer in the London Telegraph says: "On Nov. 2, 1336, a law came into force in England for the regulation of meals and continued to have a place on the statute book until 1857. It was designed to check the evils resulting from an excessive use of costly meats and enacted that no one should partake at any place or time (except on specified festivals and holidays to the

number of sixteen days a year) of more than two courses, each not consisting of more than two sorts of victuals, either flesh or fish, with the common sorts of pottage, and inexpensive sauce. On named feast days three courses were allowed. This law was an extension of an ordinance issued by Edward II in 1315 regulating the meals of his nobles, the greater of whom were allowed in addition to two courses of two kinds of meat a side dish of one sort. An act of 1363 enacts that servants, artisans and laborers "shall be served to eat and drink, once a day of flesh or fish and remnant of other victuals, as of butter, milk and cheese, according to their station in life."

MISS ISABEL HAGNER, private secretary of Mrs. Roosevelt, is a most valuable assistant. The Kansas City Journal, writing about this young lady, says: "She has a fortune ample for all the frivolities of Newport and Tuxedo or for division of her life between Fifth avenue and Belgrave square, but she prefers to follow the useful career she mapped out for herself when, with a thinner purse, she entered semi-public life. When Miss Hagner came into a handsome inheritance recently she gave no sign of intention to leave her present post."

THE battleship Maine, which was blown up in Havana harbor just before the Spanish-American war, is to be raised and placed on exhibition by an amusement company. The Washington correspondent for the New York Herald, speaking of the project, says: "For \$5,000 the United States Battle Ship Maine Salvage company, of this city, has bought from the Cuban government the wreck of the Maine in Havana harbor. A cofferdam will be built around the hulk, which will be raised. If any of the 74 bodies of American sailors which were not recovered after the battle ship was destroyed on February 15, 1898, are discovered, they will be removed and buried with due honors in the United States, if the navy department desires to take charge of them, or in Havana, if the Washington government makes no provision. The salvage company will make arrangements for the sale of the machinery and armor of the ship. The people of Havana will be allowed to visit the hulk upon payment of a small fee. It is planned, after Cuban curiosity is satisfied, to put a new bottom on the ship and tow it to Coney Island. There it will be exhibited as a curiosity to all who are willing to pay 25 cents admission, or whatever fee the managers may stipulate."

THE wrecked battleship has been a serious impediment to navigation in the harbor, and this writer adds: "The Cuban government asked the United States if it still maintained any claim upon the wreck of the Maine. Through the state department the American government replied that whatever interest the United States had held in the wreck of the Maine had lapsed. Acting upon this acknowledgment the Cuban government on June 9 last concluded a contract with Mr. Wycoff. He was authorized to utilize in his wrecking operations a space of 100 feet around the wreck. It was stipulated that he should begin operations within six months after the signature of the contract. There is also an idea that if Cuba could get \$5,000 for the hulk that the United States might have done as well or better. The steel machinery and armor is worth far more than that even at the bottom of Havana harbor. The machinery cost \$735,000. The battleship when commissioned cost more than \$4,000,000."

ACCORDING to a writer in the Atlanta Constitution, Sweden is a woman's paradise. This writer says: "Women share every privilege offered their husbands and brothers and those who have to earn their living find the doors of no profession shut in their faces. The fair sex invades every public department. Women are the bank clerks as well as the postoffice clerks and life in a Swedish town is made pleasant for the worker. Every day, for example, the postoffices are closed from 3 to 5 o'clock and during that time

the clerks may rest or take part in some of the many outdoor games that are popular there."

INDEED, this old-fashioned country is an ideal place, according to this same writer, for he adds: "Stealing is rarely heard of and the more serious crimes are almost unknown. The street cars have no conductors to collect fare; each passenger puts the money in a little box by the door. In places of amusement people hang their hats and coats in a large hall and there is no attendant in charge of valuable furs, often left to the mercy of the passerby. Drunkenness is almost impossible, owing to the Draconian laws regulating the sale of wine and spirits. No tobacco can be purchased by boys. Laborers are paid partly in money and partly in goods. House servants are poorly remunerated, according to the scale of wages prevailing in America. A first-class coachman gets but \$80 a year and the same sum satisfies a cook housekeeper, who often has to manage the whole of a large establishment. On the other hand, the head of the estate is expected to look after his people in sickness and in health. He educates their children, pays the doctor and teaches their sons and daughters trades. Sweden is a profoundly religious country. The Bible is read aloud daily by the head of the family and a Bible is the first gift made by a young man to his betrothed."

CARL PINNEY of Ithaca, N. Y., has a charmed life, if reports concerning him are true. The Detroit Journal enumerates the following escapades through which he has passed without wholly relinquishing his title to a place in the land of the living: "Carl Pinney, aged fourteen, was ambitious to emulate circus feats, and with two other boys hitched one end of a wire to a tree, thirty-five feet from the ground in a pasture lot. As Carl was starting down the slide, the wire broke, letting him fall about thirty-five feet to the ground, breaking his right leg between his knee and the ankle, dislocating his ankle and badly bruising him. This is only one in a chapter of accidents this lad has sustained. He began by falling down the cellar stairs. Then he sprained his wrist by falling from a horse. Then sprained it again by falling from a cow. A horse ran away with Carl on his back, galloped into a barn door, knocking him insensible. Then he backed up against the stove and burned himself; next he shot himself through the hand, and afterwards laid himself up for three months by cutting his foot. He dived into a deep place at Crystal lake and narrowly escaped drowning, as it required three and one-half hours to resuscitate him. He badly burned his foot by stepping in hot ashes, fell out of a tree and sprained his arm and was in a runaway with Wilbur Nelson and badly shaken up. This last is probably the worst accident that ever befell him, but he evidently bears a charmed life, and will probably recover."

THE recent election has caused a subject for comment on the question: Who was the worst beaten presidential nominee? The New York Sun gives the following information: "Horace Greeley is often referred to as the worst beaten candidate for president ever nominated by either of the great parties. In the November election of 1872 Mr. Greeley was defeated, the popular majority against him being 727,000. That majority, though considerable, did not record the full measure of the disaster of the Greeley canvass, for about three weeks later, on November 29, Mr. Greeley died, and when the electors in the states which he had carried met in January, only three of them—three from Georgia—voted for Mr. Greeley, and the votes of these three were objected to on the official canvass on the ground that Mr. Greeley, having died, was not an eligible candidate to vote for, his death being a 'historic fact.' The house of representatives refused to receive these three votes; the senate agreed to. As a consequence, therefore, Mr. Greeley did not actually receive a single electoral vote, but the Greeley electoral ticket polled 80 electoral and 2,800,000 popular votes."