

# CURRENT TOPICS

IN the midst of the discussion concerning the propriety of the protest made by the Congregational ministers against the use of John D. Rockefeller's \$100,000 for foreign missions, comes the announcement that Mr. Rockefeller has concluded to provide for the University of Chicago a \$50,000,000 endowment. Newspaper dispatches say that the faculty of the University recently received a letter from Mr. Rockefeller in which, after referring to President Harper's illness, the assurance is given that Mr. Rockefeller will increase the university's indebtedness to him by an additional endowment of \$50,000,000. It is explained that Mr. Rockefeller considers that this sum "will make it possible to complete his scheme for a gigantic educational institution."

VARIOUS comments have been made with respect to the protest made by the Boston clergymen against the Rockefeller contribution to foreign missions. Rev. J. W. Frizzell, pastor of the First Congregational church at Sioux City, is represented as saying: "If the devil himself should give me \$1,000,000 to use in the Lord's business, I'd take it and use it." The Sioux City Journal says that Mr. Frizzell explains that he did not mean to draw a simile between Mr. Rockefeller and the devil, but Dr. Frizzell said: "It doesn't seem to me to be part of a minister's duty to run down the source of every dollar which comes into his hands. If that sort of police work were to be undertaken by the clergy I am afraid there would be no end to it. I certainly do not presume to determine the origin of every dollar of my salary as pastor. Let the board of missions take Rockefeller's \$100,000 and make the best use of it."

ANOTHER Sioux City minister, Rev. John S. Watts, pastor of the First Baptist church, said: "I do not agree at all with the stand these eastern ministers have taken against the Rockefeller donation. As I understand it, the Congregational board of missions asked Mr. Rockefeller for this money over which the trouble has arisen. I don't think it is necessary for the church to require absolute proof of the cleanliness of every dollar it gets. And I don't know the \$100,000 which Mr. Rockefeller proposed to donate to the Congregational missions is in any way stained. Isn't it better that the \$100,000 should go into Christian missionary work than into luxuries for Mr. Rockefeller?"

ON questions of this character, as indeed upon all other public questions, the New York Sun says something of interest. In an editorial entitled: "The money of the trust magnate," the Sun says: "If the head of a university, or a charity board, or a church society, has reason to believe that the money of an offered gift was the loot of a bank or stolen from the widow or orphan, that university president, or that board or society, has two duties to perform; first, to decline the money; second, to set the officers of justice on the track of the thief. But how can the money which a man of large fortune offers to give away for the public good be regarded in the same light if it was acquired in the way of business, though it be the money of an unpopular 'trust magnate?' But it is tainted, cry some emotional persons carried away by the agitation against the trusts and the railroads. A year ago there was not a university, or a charity board, or a church society that would not have accepted the money of any trust magnate in the country and said 'thank you' for it. But now there is an increasing number of people, chiefly connected with the church, who say the money of one such man is unclean and cannot be touched without contamination. They call him a highwayman, a robber, an enemy of the Republic, and a criminal and all sorts of shocking names. Now, if these excellent persons can prove what they say, then his money is indeed tainted and it should be refused; and they ought to prove their charges as well as throw the check in his face."

THE SUN expresses the opinion that these clergymen will "do nothing but talk, and in the end will take the money and thank the donor." The Sun adds: "Such moralists always say exactly what may be expected of them; they do not

blaze the way for opinion but when opinion is once developed and makes a noise in the land they join in the uproar with unctious. What better use can money sordidly acquired be put to than the education of youth, the relief of distress, or the redemption of the vicious and the benighted? If it is counterfeit, of course it can't be used for such purposes. But when it is tainted? This as Dr. Parkhurst says, is a delicate question and he suggests that we don't know how the widow got her two mites. This reflection ought to trouble the good men who don't want the bad trust magnate's money. Would they be willing to accept it if he could show that he made it by selling Adirondack lands at an advance? But how could it be distinguished in his bank deposit from money which they suspect is tainted? There's the rub! If this cry about tainted money is to spread, a great many beneficent institutions will have to go into the receiver's hands. What about the man who according to report, has sold adulterated goods, or the dealer whose coal was slaty and short in measure or the money lender whose methods were usurious—is their money to be refused as tainted? Where is the taint to begin and where to end?"

BUT Dr. Washington Gladden of Columbus, Ohio, moderator of the national council of Congregational churches, has an opinion of his own. The Columbus correspondent for the Chicago Record Herald, under date of March 26, says that Dr. Gladden delivered a sermon on the subject: "The religion of a gentleman," in which he said: "The money proffered to our board of missions comes out of a collateral estate whose foundations were laid in the most relentless rapacity known to modern commercial history. The success of this business from the beginning until now has been largely due to unlawful and outrageous manipulations of railway rates. The whole country is now up in arms against this species of robbery. It has a right to be. It has been a long time waking up to this enormity. It is in this cause far more than to any other that the monopolies which have been grinding the life out of American industries owe their power. The United States government is now engaged in a strenuous attempt to ferret out and punish this injustice. And the people of the United States have a tremendous battle on their hands with the corporate greed which has entrenched itself in this stronghold and has learned to use the railways for the oppression and spoliation of the people."

IN the sermon referred to, Dr. Gladden did not mince words. He deliberately charged John D. Rockefeller with being "the great organizer of this system of plunder," saying: "The man from whom our missionary society proposes to accept the gift is the great organizer of this system of plunder. His fortune was built on this foundation. He has taught the other plunderers most of what they know about these methods. He represents more perfectly than any one else the system of brigandage by which our commerce has been ravaged for many years. This system must be attacked and overthrown if we want to save free government. In every such battle for freedom and righteousness the Congregational churches have been on the firing line. And now on the eve of this battle they are asked to accept a gift of money from the man who more completely than any other represents the system they are summoned to fight. I hope they are not mean enough to take his money and then turn around and fight him. I hope they are not so faithless to their obligations as to take his money and shut their mouths or become his apologists. We do not want this man's money. To accept it will be to work the contempt of millions of honest men; to reject it will strengthen our churches in the affection and respect of millions who are inclined to doubt whether the churches love God more than mammon. Our missions will be richer and stronger without it than with it; and we shall lose nothing by our loyalty to the things unseen and eternal."

PREPARATIONS for the prosecution of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad have, according to the Washington correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald, been completed and the case will soon be presented to the courts.

This correspondent, under date of Washington, March 26, says: "The government will present to the United States grand jury at Albuquerque, N. M., evidence collected by the interstate commerce commission. If the grand jury returns an indictment the government will begin the prosecution of the case as soon as it can get a day in court. This prosecution may include the Colorado Fuel and Iron company and the El Paso and Southwestern railroad. The law provides for the punishment of not only the corporations which grant rebates but also those which receive them. The action by the government grew out of a complaint made by the Caledonian Coal company of Gallup, N. M., which declared it was forced to retire from business by the action of the Santa Fe railroad in granting illegal rebates to competitors." It will be remembered that Paul Morton, now secretary of the navy, figured conspicuously in these rebates, while serving as vice president of the Santa Fe railroad.

THERE is just now widespread interest displayed in all practical experiments in municipal ownership. The Dubuque, Iowa, Telegraph says: "Webster City, Iowa, owns and operates its own electric lighting station, pumping station, power plant and heating plant. The receipts last year from water rentals were \$4,796.68; from electric light service, \$11,941.76; from the municipal scales, \$3971.21; from heating charges, \$5,767.67; rents of offices in the city hall bring the total receipts from municipal enterprises up to \$26,226.28. The net receipts from the public utilities were 20 per cent larger than the city's apportionment of taxes. Every one of the enterprises is yielding large returns, though the rates for service are lower than charged by private corporations elsewhere operating public utilities. How successful is municipal ownership may be judged from the fact that the council last September reduced the tax levy by seven mills."

VICE PRESIDENT FAIRBANKS recently delivered an address which no less an authority than the New York Sun declares to be "sound and kind, serious, thoughtful and without a flaw." The Sun says that Mr. Fairbanks' speech may very properly be called "safe and sane," that "nobody can find just fault with it," and that "it is full of sentiments that will receive a unanimous vote in all virtuous and patriotic assemblages." For instance Mr. Fairbanks bravely declared: "We gladly acknowledge one country and the supremacy of one flag. Our laws must be inspired by a sense of justice. Political parties are essential in popular government. They should stand for those measures which are wholesome. We face questions of great pith and moment. Let us banish bigotry. Lift American politics to a high plane. Let us wish for all our fellow citizens no matter where they reside the fullest possible measure of blessings."

COMMENTING upon these courageous utterances, the Indianapolis Sentinel says: "Those who feared that Mr. Fairbanks' impulsive and imaginative temperament might lead him into hasty utterances now see their mistake. He is conservative yet not unduly conservative. He is progressive, yet with a due regard for the old landmarks."

HENRY LOOMIS NELSON ventures the prediction that no rate making bill will ever come to a vote on the senate floor. Mr. Nelson says: "The question may be discussed or even voted upon in committee, but it is doubtful if a bill granting such power to the government will be reported to the senate." Mr. Nelson gives an interesting description of the embarrassments which Mr. Roosevelt must encounter in this way: "Those senators who have the most influence on the republican side are opposed to the suggestion which was made by the president in his message. It is said in Washington by those who are more or less familiar with the operation of the president's mind that he himself is not so much enamored of the idea as he was at the beginning of December. His mind then had been made up after consultation with the school of emotional economists whom he usually consults during the recesses of the senate. When the senate came back it was greatly