

CURRENT TOPICS

ONE of the most interesting paintings at the St. Louis exposition was what is popularly known as the "Painting of Hands." This is the work of the Flemish artist, Jef Leempoels. Public Opinion for May 20th, reproduces a fine half-tone of this wonderful painting. The artist has called his work "Destiny and Humanity." Accompanying the half-tone in Public Opinion is a description of the work written by Grace Whitworth. In this description a high tribute is paid to the "wonderful technique and symbolism" of the painting.

MISS WHITWORTH says: "A talk with the artist himself helps one to understand its meaning. Mr. Leempoels says the idea of the painting came to him as a sudden inspiration, but how best to interpret, on canvas, Destiny and Humanity, took many months of thought. Human nature is always yearning for something more. It is never content with the health, happiness, or fortune that it possesses. Most of the human race look to a power above for response to wishes and prayers for greater blessings. The artist could think of nothing more expressive in portraying this supreme power than a human countenance. So the face in the dark sky is as a source of all light to the world. It typifies God, Christ, Intelligence, or Destiny. The gaze of this face is of immeasurable penetration, and from the head light radiates to every part of the painting. His conception of humanity is represented by innumerable hands. In them can be read all the character of the individual, and so, through them, is depicted all that humanity thinks or asks."

THIS striking description of a striking picture concludes: "Below the face in the sky is held aloft the cross, crozier and scepter. Toward this symbolism of church and government are uplifted hundreds of hands, representing all conditions, races, and religions. In the left foreground is the family group. One sees the mother lifting to God the hands of her children, beseeching blessing; the clasp of two hands in love and marriage; and those wrung in grief and mourning. In the center are intermingled the jeweled, delicate hand of aristocracy; the rough coarse hand of the workman; the convict's chained hands; the hand of the suffering one, offering all his wealth for health; the prayerful, the greedy, the pleasure-loving hand. On the right are those which oppose all institutions of society. They are hands full of malice and anarchy. Here is a clenched, blood-stained one; there one flourishing the red flag of the anarchist; others treacherously waving knives, revolvers, and hatchets. In the background are the offerings to Jehovah of incense, palms, idols, music, dancing, and human sacrifices. As one contemplates this painting, many ideas crowd the mind as to its meaning. Does the church or the government bring us peace? Must our appeals be made through the church or state, or—directly to the Force that moves the universe? That, every individual must solve for himself. The painting is considered by the ablest critics a masterpiece in technique and color. Its mysticism is very striking, and yet the execution is most realistic. In the hundreds of hands painted no two are alike, and the wonderful expression in each is singularly appalling. The more one gazes, the greater becomes its mysterious fascination."

THE frequency of cyclones these days has promoted a writer for the Lincoln (Nebraska) News to present a list of notable storms, showing terrible loss of life and property. One great storm, then called a tornado (which storm is not included in the list) occurred at St. Louis in 1868. Great damage was done, and those who passed through that terrible storm will never forget it.

THE list presented by the News writer follows: Adams county, Miss., May 7, 1840, 100 killed; property loss, \$1,000,000. Same, June 13, 1842, 500 killed; property loss, \$3,000,000. Erie, Pa., July 26, 1875, 134 killed; property loss, \$500,000. Barry and Stone counties, Mo., April 18, 1880,

100 killed, 600 injured; property loss \$1,000,000. Grinnell, Ia., June 17, 1882, 100 killed, 300 injured; property loss, \$1,000,000. Emmetsburg, Ia., June 24, 1882, 100 killed; property loss, \$250,000. Illinois, Kentucky, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia, North and South Carolina, February 9, 1884, 800 killed, 2,500 injured; 10,000 buildings destroyed—an unparalleled series of tornadoes, there being over sixty of these scattered over the territory named after 10 a. m. on that day. Louisville, Ky., March 27, 1891, 76 killed, 200 injured; 900 buildings destroyed. The storm cut a path 100 feet wide through the city, destroying property of the value of \$2,500,000. Savannah, Ga., Charleston, S. C., and Southern coast, August 28, 1893, 1,000 killed; great destruction of property. Gulf coast of Louisiana, October 2, 1903, 2,000 killed; loss of property, \$5,000,000. Terrific gale on Lake Michigan, May 16, 1894, 25 lives lost and 20 vessels destroyed off the water front of Chicago. The cyclone which swept St. Louis in 1896, took nearly one hundred lives and destroyed \$10,000,000 worth of property. One of the severe storms of the country which was not cyclonic in character, was the hurricane and tidal wave which destroyed the better part of Galveston in September, 1900. The loss of life has never been accurately determined. The property damage was placed at \$10,000,000. The storm came out of the Gulf of Mexico, and had been preceded by a long period of barometric depression.

THE people of Philadelphia have been greatly disturbed because of what is known as "the gas scandal." It seems that the state has leased the gas works to the company that is now operating them, for a period of thirty years, and it has provided that, at the end of ten years—1907—the city shall have the right to terminate the contract by paying for the improvements which have been made. The Philadelphia city council, acting at the behest of the Gas company, passed a resolution granting to the Gas company a franchise for seventy-five years. This would prevent the city acquiring possession of the plant before 1980.

MAYOR WEAVER of Philadelphia promptly declared war on the republican organization because of its advocacy of the gas ordinance. The mayor summarily removed the directors of public safety and public works, who were charged with being the tools of the organization. By the appointment to these places of men who will do his bidding the mayor has placed himself in a position where he will have the power to discharge every one of the 20,000 city employes whose support made the republican opposition possible. The mayor thought that with this power in his hands the city employes would use their influence with the organization to prevent the gas ordinance from being passed over the mayor's veto. Mayor Weaver announced "this will be a battle to the bitter end, a battle to death on the gas lease and all kindred matters. Philadelphia is facing a state of anarchy. There will be no mercy shown."

DURING the first two years of his administration Mayor Weaver has worked closely with the republican organization and he has brought upon himself considerable criticism. In his attitude on the gas franchise he seems to have completely reversed his policy, and while his old time associates are roundly abusing him, he is receiving congratulations from the rank and file of Philadelphians.

IN THE application of the city officials discharged by Mayor Weaver, Judge Ralston granted an order requiring the mayor to show cause why he should not be permanently enjoined from removing the Gas company's favorite officials. An interesting feature of the Philadelphia situation is the fact that many prominent republicans exerted every effort to embarrass Mayor Weaver in his fight for public interests. But the mayor won the victory, the gas company withdrawing from the contest in the face of the aroused public sentiment.

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT, according to the Washington correspondent for the Pittsburg (Pa.) Gazette, has flatly assumed all responsibility for Secretary Taft's free trade order. The Gazette correspondent says: He told all of his callers who talked with him on the subject that he had personally directed the action and that no other course was open to him since the government was bound to construct the canal with the greatest possible economy. He also indicated quite plainly that he did not consider that a political principle was involved. If the party question was to be considered, where would the administration land if it did not buy the cheapest market and should thus lay itself open to the charge of paying the highest prices to the trusts, not to say scandal and fraud? At any rate the question was up to congress. That body had an opportunity to act once and would have an opportunity to act again.

THIS frank assumption of responsibility has not quelled the disorder in the republican party. The Gazette correspondent says: "The family row continues to grow. The talk of the action is not entirely outside of the cabinet. There has been talk today about 'such a policy, if persisted in, would end in disrupting the republican party, or at least in making difficult the path of the next republican candidates.'" Representative John Dalzell of Pennsylvania came out in an interview tonight scoring the action in vigorous terms. He called it "free trade" and "a fight for gods and men," and said that congress had never acted and never intended to act. At the same time many protests are coming in, especially from American shipbuilders. Senators Scott and Burrows, both high tariff republicans, called on Secretary Taft and criticized the administration's policy. "I have dropped in to your political funeral, Mr. Secretary," said Senator Scott. "Can't come to my funeral without bringing flowers, and I see no flowers," replied the secretary. At the same time Mr. Taft said that he would stand by the action to the very end, funeral or no funeral. He told his callers there was no reason why the government should pay a quarter more for material made in America, or pay for two ships here a sum that would buy four ships in Europe.

IT IS predicted by this same authority that if the administration undertakes to buy in the markets of the world congress will pass a bill requiring the commission to patronize home industries. This correspondent says: Such a bill was introduced in the last congress, but was not brought to vote. However, none of the leaders contemplated that by the failure of that measure the government would scale its own tariff walls and go over into foreign markets to get the benefit of low tariff prices. Prominent republicans in the house and senate will never consent to such a policy and when congress assembles in the fall one of the first measures to be introduced will be one to direct the canal commission to confine its purchases to American markets. No governmental policy in years has aroused the interest and discussion that the announcement of the canal commission has. It means that in the next session of congress the tariff question will be to the front with the possibility of the "stand patters" being unable longer to resist the pressure for a new bill. High protectionists are outspoken in their opposition to the canal commission's policy and they will insist that supplies and materials for the canal must be bought in American markets."

IT HAS been taken for granted by the newspaper writers that if the government purchased abroad it would not be required to pay duties on its imports. Secretary Taft speaking to an Associated Press correspondent at Columbus, Ohio, May 24, said: "The laws provide for the purchase of supplies for the isthmus. They provide that, where supplies are bought in foreign lands, the government must pay duty the same as an individual purchaser. The laws further provide that for the army, the price and quality being the same, American goods shall be preferred. In the Philippines the army has constantly bought where it could get the cheapest. It has bought frozen meats from Australia at six cents that would have cost fifteen cents from