

CURRENT TOPICS

THE ACETYLENE JOURNAL, devoted to lighting and kindred subjects, in its issue of May presents several interesting reports showing some remarkable experiments of acetylene on plant growth. Several of these experiments were made at Cornell University. It has not yet been established beyond question that the discovery of acetylene's influence on plants will have commercial value to florists and plant growers, but the Journal says: "When it is considered that the demand and price of flowers and every other forced growths is the greatest in the period of shortest days, about the holidays, it seems likely that enterprising plant forcers will avail themselves of these results to conduct tests having a commercial bearing. At any rate, the Cornell experiments seem to have proceeded far enough to place acetylene in a class by itself as an artificial light approximating daylight." Mr. M. J. Iorns of Ithaca, New York, asks the question, "Has Old Sol a substitute" and then by way of partial answer, although expressly declaring his unwillingness to draw definite conclusions, presents some of the striking facts obtained in his own experiments. Mr. Iorns' experiments together with those of other investigators, are illustrated in the May number of the Acetylene Journal, published in Chicago. Any one interested in these experiments would do well to apply to Elias A. Long, editor of the Journal for copies of his publication.

THE Colorado Board of Pardons in session June 3, granted pardons to Stephen D. Impey and Charles Impey, Leadville men who since June 5, 1903, have been in the Colorado penitentiary. At one time the Impey brothers seemed in imminent danger of being lynched. Now, after they have served two years in prison the person on whose accusation they were arrested and convicted, confesses that she was persuaded to make the infamous charge, and that the Impey brothers are innocent men.

WESTERN farmers are having considerable trouble this year with the Hessian fly. Professor Lawrence Bruner of the Nebraska State University has issued an interesting bulletin relating to this insect. Professor Bruner says that in the fall of 1904 the Hessian fly did an unusual amount of injury to winter wheat in the southeastern counties of Nebraska, in many instances the injury amounting to fully 50 per cent or more of the plants being attacked. In some localities the plants were killed outright. Professor Bruner says that there is still much chance of danger for the present crop, and he asks that farmers coming in contact with the Hessian fly, send to his office reports of their experience. Professor Bruner says: "Of course the Hessian fly, like all other insects, passes through several stages in the course of its life, viz: the egg, the larva or magot, the pupa or 'flax-seed,' and finally the imago or perfect insect—the fly. The injury is all done by the magot. The 'flax-seed' is the resting stage in which the insect passes through the cold winter as well as the hot dry summer months. It is in this stage of the insect's career and during the summer that we must do our fighting if we wish to destroy the pest."

ABOUT 5,000 persons, according to a writer for the Brooklyn Eagle, annually disappear in the United States, and are never heard from again. That writer says: "At first blush the assertion seems incredible, but police statistics furnish confirmation. The actual figures, based on a conservative calculation, are even more alarming than those given. In fact the reports of the police departments of the larger cities show that in the twelve months just past, 16,008 of the persons who disappeared during the year were never reported as found; but the shrewd police officers, accustomed to the eccentricities of human nature, are of the opinion that the return of many thousands of these persons, through shame or indifference, was never reported at police headquarters. But even after making allowance for this feature of the case, it is reasonably certain that more than five thousand persons were swallowed up in oblivion. The tragedies of

real life hidden within these peculiar cases, if they could but be brought to light, would rival many of the novels penned by the world's greatest writers. No subject that can be imagined has such weird fascination as that of the thousands and thousands who have gone down this grand canyon of oblivion."

A GLANCE at the police statistics in a few of the leading cities shows the ever growing extent of the "disappearance habit." The Eagle writer says: "In the city of New York during the last year 1,415 persons were reported to the police as missing. Of this number 751 returned to their homes, leaving 664 still missing or unaccounted for. In Philadelphia during the same period 1,912 persons were reported as missing. Of this number 1,555 returned to their homes, leaving 367 who were still in the land of the missing. In Boston during the year 411 persons were reported as missing, and 108 of these were afterward located, leaving 303 unaccounted for. This percentage of unexplained cases is larger in proportion than either New York or Philadelphia, but Superintendent Pierce is of the opinion that a number of those persons reported as missing afterward sought their homes and the friends or relatives neglected to notify the police of the fact."

THE traffic passenger manager of the Japanese government railroads is Y. Kinoshita. Speaking to a correspondent for the Chicago Examiner Y. Kinoshita made several interesting statements, all of which were confirmed by D. Nishi, civil engineer in the Supervising Bureau of both government and private railroads, and T. Mimoto, freight traffic manager of the Japanese government. Kinoshita said: "The average passenger rate on the railroads of Japan is three-fourths of a cent a mile while the highest rate is four-fifths of a cent a mile. This is the result of government ownership and operation of sufficient mileage to establish a just return upon the actual capital invested in the construction and maintenance of both government and private roads, devoid of watered stock."

ONE-THIRD of the railroads in Japan are owned and operated by the Japanese government. Pointing out this fact, Kinoshita said: "The passenger rates, which are the same as on the private roads, are based upon the distance traveled, according to the following:

Eight-tenths of a cent a mile, under 50 miles.
Seven-tenths of a cent a mile, 50 to 100 miles.
Six-tenths of a cent a mile, 100 to 200 miles.
One-half cent a mile, 200 to 300 miles.
Above 300 miles the rate is four-tenths of a cent a mile.

"Under government ownership and operation of railroads we get much cheaper service in both freight and passenger traffic than you get in America, while in Japan it costs much more to construct railroads than in this country. The actual construction and full equipment, including rolling stock, is about \$40,000 a mile in Japan, while it is much less in this country. Yes, I know your roads are capitalized for over \$60,000 a mile, but more than half of that is what you call 'watered stock' which is based upon the ability to demand high rates, and not on the actual cost of construction and operation. Japan is a mountainous country, making the cost of railroad construction much greater than here, but with all our steep grades, costly bridges, cuts and tunnels, our roads, including equipment, cost only about \$40,000 a mile."

ACCORDING to Kinoshita, the Japanese also have cheaper freight rates than prevail in America. He explains that the average freight rate in Japan, nearly all hauls being termed short-hauls, is about one cent a mile for a ton of merchandise, and adds: "There is no such thing as 'watered stock' in the railroads of Japan. The government would not permit it under any circumstances. The passenger and freight rates are fixed to return a reasonable rate upon the

cost of construction and maintenance, the government roads, and private roads as well, earning from seven to eight per cent. The government issued four and five per cent bonds which were sold on the market at par. With this money the government roads were constructed. As the roads earn from seven to eight per cent, they will soon pay for themselves. After a few more costly investigations and lawsuits by the United States government, I think you will conclude to adopt government ownership, which has been a success for thirty years in Japan. The private roads in Japan have the same rates as those owned by the government. The government roads act as a leverage, compelling the private roads to adopt the same rates. We expect to remain in this country for at least six months, studying the railroads of this country. Your railway coaches are superior to ours, but we have the best roadbed."

DR. H. HANDYSIDE, now on his way to London to report to the British admiralty, was a member of an observation party connected with Nogi's army before Port Arthur. He was present when Port Arthur fell, and relates some interesting stories concerning the conduct of Russian officers. Speaking to the Victoria (B. C.) correspondent for the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Dr. Handy said: "I saw with my own eyes between 200 and 500 Russian officers in the wards of the sanitary hospital at Port Arthur who had not a scratch on their bodies. They feigned illness to escape the work and danger of defending the fortress. Moreover, I saw 25,000, well armed, well nourished and in good health, march out and lay down their arms to Nogi's army of careworn, ill-fed and battered soldiers, whom, by all rules of logic, they could have resisted indefinitely. At the bottom of Port Arthur harbor I saw warships enough to have swept Togo from the sea, had a proper effort been made to do so." Summing up, Dr. Handyside declared the Russian soldier brave and, to a degree, capable, but that the officers, as a whole, are poltroons and actually afraid to bear their share of the duties and dangers of the campaign.

AS A RESULT of the rejection by the directors of the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the report of the Frick investigating committee, Henry C. Frick, Edward H. Harriman and C. N. Bliss have resigned from the directorate of the Society. Other resignations are promised. The New York correspondent for the Chicago Tribune says that the report of the Frick committee covers thirty-eight printed pages, and is a scathing arraignment of the management of the Equitable Life Assurance Society. It condemns unreservedly all transactions of the syndicate known as "James H. Hyde and Associates," calls on all other directors besides him who participated in the profits to make restitution, and recommends that President Alexander, first Vice President Hyde and Second Vice President Tarbell be removed. The report deals with the recently exposed history of the Equitable, with much of which the reading public is familiar.

THE Frick committee finds that there has been gross mismanagement under Hyde and inexcusable carelessness on the part of Alexander. In its report the committee says that Mr. Alexander should have made his charge to the board of directors long ago in order to prevent Mr. Hyde's re-election as vice president last February. Not only does it find that Alexander was "culpably negligent," but also that he "openly encouraged" some of Hyde's irregularities. For instance, on November 14, 1904, Alexander wrote to Hyde: "I don't know just when Willie is to return, but I suggest, with your concurrence, that he be charged with the responsibility of steering the fiscal committee when it meets. We have two new members on it, and it is just as well that they should all be under reasonable observation. Let him remember that the only duty of this fiscal committee is to prove our annual statement. It is not their province to go into the management of the company, or to express opinions about methods. When they come to proving what we call our 'ledger balances' it has been