CURRENT TOPICS

IN FEBRUARY President Roosevelt appointed Judson Harmon of Cincinnati and F. M. Judson of St. Louis, to investigate the charges made by the interstate commerce commission against the Santa Fe railroad, of which road Paul Morton, secretary of the navy, was at one time traffic manager. As a witness before the United States district court, Mr. Morton, while serving as a Santa Fe official, said: "We tried the costly experiment of being honest in this thing—living up to the law as we understood it, and declining to pay rebates—and we lost so much business that we found we have got to do as the Romans did." Messrs. Harmon and Judson made the investigation which, as they were assured by Mr. Roosevelt at the time of their appointment, was "with the view of taking such legal proceedings as seemed justified."

MESSRS. HARMON AND JUDSON have completed their investigation and the New York World is authority for the statement that they recommended that the prosecution of Paul Morton is justified. The World says, however, that the administration has decided that Mr. Morton must not be prosecuted, and that Messrs. Harmon and Judson will resign in disgust.

THE report that Messrs. Harmon and Judson would "resign in disgust" because Attorney General Moody would not act on their recommendation and prosecute Paul Morton, has been corroborated. An Associated Press dispatch under date of Cincinnati June 14, says: "Judge Judson Harmon, who was engaged with F. N. Judson of St. Louis by Attorney General Moody to investigate charges that the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroad was granting rebates to the Colorado Fuel and Iron company, today gave out the following statement in which he confirms the report that he had terminated his commission with the government: 'As the dispatch was given to the press which asked me in connection with Mr. Judson to undertake the duty of investigating and reporting on the alleged rebates given by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad to the Colorado Fuel and Iron company, I think there should now be no mystery about what has become of the matter. Mr. Judson and myself made the investigation and recommended that certain proceedings be taken. The attorney general disapproved our recommendations, as he had a perfect right to do. The nature and circumstances of our appointment seemed to impose a degree of important responsibility and we thought our duty required us to adhere to our views. We have so notified the attorney general and retired from further connection with the matter.'"

WHAT was called a reform in Equitable affairs has turned out to be the capture of the Equitable Assurance company by the Thomas F. Ryan syndicate. Mr. Ryan has chosen Paul Morton, now secretary of the navy, to be the active head of Equitable affairs. The New York World says: "Mr. Ryan recognizes that people who have had experience with his management of other public corporations will regard with misgivings his control of the Equitable. To dispel this apprehension he seeks to have a former president of the United States, the presiding justice of the appellate division and a great Pittsburg manufacturer stand as sponsors for him. His letter of invitation has been published. How can any of the invited accept in view of the warning as to their lack of power plainly stated in these words of Mr. Ryan: 'The duties of the trust would be very light, as in the nature of things when a satisfactory board is once constituted there are few changes, and all the clerical and formal work would be done by the office force of the company.'" But the former president, the presiding justice and the Pittsburg manufacturer have accepted, and now Mr. Ryan will proceed to build up the Equitable and, as is believed by many, to create the most gigantic trust in the history of trust creation.

THE New York correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald says: "The purchase of a controlling interest in the Equitable Assurance Society by Thomas F. Ryan and associates has resulted in a closer alliance between the Equitable and Mutual Life Insurance companies, and at the same time gives them joint control in banks, trust and insurance companies that can show assets of nearly $1,500,000,000. The purchase of the Hyde stock means the passing of control of nearly $800,000,000 additional assets to the Ryan syndicate. The assets of the Equitable and Mutual Life companies and five institutions in which they are largely interested aggregate $1,337,296,000. The list does not include smaller institutions that come under the same head. The assets of this gigantic combination exceed the total net deposits of the associated banks of New York by more than $200,000,000."

THE following table gives the assets of seven of the Equitable-Mutual institutions:

Equitable Assurance Society........	$ 413,950,000
Mutual Life Insurance Company....	441,000,000
National Bank of Commerce.........	251,780,000
Equitable Trust Company	52,123,000
Mercantile Trust Company	68,835,000
Morton Trust Company	61,134,000
Guarantee Trust Company	48,474,000
Total	$1,337,296,000

The Record-Herald correspondent says: "It was said by a banker believed to be very close to Mr. Ryan that the latter's plan in connection with the purchase of the Hyde stock contemplates the elimination from the Equitable business control of all the subsidiary companies. This is to result speedily in the consolidation of the Equitable Trust company, the Mercantile Trust company and the Morton Trust company (Ryan's own institution) with the last-named, of course, in control. This would mean the largest and most powerful trust company in the United States and one of the most powerful financial institutions in the world."

ACCORDING to this same authority the consolidation of the Mercantile and Equitable Trust companies was arranged by James H. Hyde last year but the Equitable row prevented its consummation. The Record-Herald's correspondent says: "The combined resources of the three companies would aggregate the enormous sum of $178,000,000. The Equitable and Mercantile Trust companies are controlled absolutely by the Equitable. The Morton Trust company is controlled by Mr. Ryan and some of his associates. It was organized out of the old established banking house of Morton, Bliss & Co. The president of the company is Levi P. Morton, former vice president of the United States. The vice presidents are Thomas F. Ryan, James K. Corbiere and Charles H. Allen. The treasurer is Charles A. Conant. The directory includes Joseph LaRocque, D. O. Mills, R. A. McCurdy, president of the Mutual Life Insurance company; W. G. Oakman, G. F. Peabody, Samuel Rea, Elihu Root, Jacob H. Schiff, John Sloane, John Jacob Astor, George F. Baker, president of the First National bank; Edward J. Berwind, Frederic Cornwall, treasurer of the Mutual Life Insurance company; James B. Duke, the tobacco king; Henry M. Flagler, George G. Haven, A. D. Juilliard, Winthrop Rutherford and Harry Payne Whitney. It is evident from the names of those directors how far-reaching Mr. Ryan's coup is. In fact, it was generally conceded in Wall street that it means a close working alliance between the three big insurance companies for their mutual benefit and that the Morgan and First National bank interests were in alliance with Mr. Ryan and associates, chief of whom are the interests identified with the Mutual Life Insurance company."

IT is plain that policy holders most deeply interested in Equitable affairs do not intend to take anything for granted under the Ryan syndicate management. One of the directors of the Equitable who recently resigned his position, said that there would be a demand, first, that the trust agreement, under which Grover Cleveland and his associates acted, be made public, and also that all other affairs relating to the Equitable and the transfer of its interests to the Ryan syndicate be itemized for the inspection of the policy holders.

THE arrangement whereby the Thomas F. Ryan syndicate has secured control of the Equitable has made such a deep impression upon New York circles that Ryan is referred to by the New York World as "the New Rockefeller." The World has selected Mr. Ryan as a worthy successor of the Standard Oil magnate who, as the World says, "cannot escape the payment of the final debt of nature," and must of necessity have a successor. Referring to "the new Rockefeller," the World says: "Mr. Ryan is no child of fortune. His steady rise has been due to no opportunity which he did not aid in creating. He is the logical product of modern economical conditions. Every rung of the ladder of success has known Ryan's tread. He has climbed slowly, skipping no round, making every position secure before he advanced to the next. From one little crosstown horse-car line to all the surface railroads in New York, from one little electric company in Harlem to complete control of all the gas and electricity in New York, from one little tobacco company making cigarettes to the control of the tobacco trade of the United States, from a tiny beginning in New York less than thirty years ago to the proprietorship of Tammany's leader and to the domination of New York's affairs—this is a summary of Thomas F. Ryan's career."

JAMES CREELMAN writing for the New York World concerning the differences between Norway and Sweden says that the separation "shows that the two old Scandinavian countries are irrevocably divided on economic rather than political issues. It is the world-wide struggle between protection and free trade worked out on local lines to its logical result." Mr. Creelman explains: "It is true that the hardy, democratic, seafaring Norwegians affect a contempt for the Swedes as a title-loving, sordid, servile and luxurious people. But the substance of the quarrel between the parliaments of Norway and Sweden relates to the commercial interests involved in the conduct of foreign relations by the king. The two peoples are of Teutonic origin, blond, tall, muscular, and devoted to the Christian religion, which was forced upon them by the sword. So like are they in personal appearance and habit that most foreigners find it difficult to distinguish them as separate nations or to understand why a Norwegian becomes angry when he is mistaken for a Swede. But the Norwegians are crowded along the coasts of their country. They have little agriculture or manufacture. They look to the commerce of the sea. They are sailors and salt water traders. They want open ports everywhere. Both sentiment and necessity confirm them as free traders. On the other hand, the Swedes, a more numerous people, living in more fertile territory, have developed large industrial and agricultural interests and are strong supporters of a patriotic tariff."

DURING the Napoleonic wars Norway was a part of the kingdom of Denmark. Mr. Creelman says: "The Danish king sided with Napoleon; so, in 1814, the allies, under the leadership of Great Britain, punished Denmark by compelling her to cede Norway to Sweden, which was then virtually ruled by Bernadotte, the great French field marshal, who had been chosen by the Swedes as heir to their throne, Charles XIII. being childless. Four years after the union of Norway and Sweden, Bernadotte, the soldier, once a dreaded rival of Napoleon in France, mounted the Swedish-Norwegian throne as Charles XIV. The present king, Oscar II, is a grandson of Bernadotte. According to the terms of the union effected in 1814, the two kingdoms were to retain their separate systems, with separate parliaments and separate ministries. But the minister of foreign affairs was to be a Swede, and the control of foreign relations was to be in the keeping of the king. Under a masterful ruler like Bernadotte the antagonisms of Norway and Sweden were kept in abeyance, and the Scandinavian peninsula made great progress. But since that time the separate policies of the kingdoms have